

Volume 1 Issue 1

PiNK

pages

India's National Gay & Lesbian Magazine

FREEDOM..

after
150
years!

Coming Out and Coming Together!

India's National Gay & Lesbian Magazine !

From the Editor's desk... 01

FEATURES

Cover Story Freedom... after 150 years!	02
Politics & Activism Colours of Pride	04
Metro Life Chennai's open arms for the 'criminals in love'	08
Happenings Queer Thoughts	10
LGBT History Stonewall- The freedom wars	11
Religion Musings of a gay Hindu	12
Neighbours Being gay in Pakistan	15
Science Nature or Nurture? A debate revisited	18
Health Living with HIV	21
Relationships Not just friends!	24

PROFILES

In Conversation with Monish	23
-----------------------------	----

PERSONALS

Planes and Parachutes	28
I "was" Bi, I "am" Gay!	
Coming Out Helpline	33
Why We must change!	

NEWS DIGEST 35

Delhi High Court's historic judgement
Gay Pride parades India, 2009
40 years of Stonewall

CULTURE

Fashion Homme a la Homo	39
Books The Boyfriend, A Married Woman, Maurice	41
Literature LGBT Literature: Why Bother?	44
Cinema Milk, I can't think straight, Before Night Falls	46
Theatre Mahesh Dattani	49
Television Queer As Folk	51
Arts Colouring the World Queer	54
Destinations: Delhi	56

FICTION

Short Stories:	59
I don't have anything to wear!	
Enchant of Love	
Poetry: 'He'	63

REGULARS

Ask your Queer Peer!	
From the Blogosphere	
Queer 'n Funny!	65
Sacred Tidings	58
Events	66
Helplines	67
Opinion Polls	
Queer Quotes	68



From the Editor's desk.

This first issue couldn't have been released at a better time. At this historic moment, as we celebrate the decriminalization of homosexuality in the world's largest democracy, let us also take time out to acknowledge the relentless struggle of those thousands of known and unknown men and women who've made this victory possible. And therefore, to them is dedicated this first issue, with the theme- Freedom... after 150 years!

When *TimeOut* Magazine interviewed me about the upcoming *Pink Pages* project, one of the first questions that they asked me was- how is it different from the queer publications already in place? And the answer is- in many ways.

For starters, this is India's first ever national gay and lesbian magazine. All other queer publications till now have been either restricted geographically, or had been targeted only for a limited intellectual readership. This is the first effort to reach out the entire community at large- at an all-India level.

Secondly, this is also India's first online queer magazine. That ensures that it reaches out to people anywhere around the world- free of cost!

But most importantly, this is a non-profitable community venture. Almost the entire *Pink Pages* team consists of students or young professionals from various fields- humanities, engineering, medicine, arts- who pooled in money and talent to successfully bring out this

landmark first issue.

I'll take this opportunity to thank every single of my team-mates, from all across India and even abroad, for it is their dedication, equanimity and tenacity that has ensured what we have today.

Pink Pages was long due. India was waiting for it. And so we should all celebrate its coming out! Let this magazine be the voice of the now unstoppable and unbeatable Indian gay and lesbian community.

Nipun Goyal
(Editor-in-chief)

Letters to the editor can be addressed to : editor@pink-pages.co.in

Freedom After 150 Years

Nipun Goyal speaks to three prominent gay rights activists on the historic Delhi High Court ruling declaring homosexuality legal- Mayur, from the Delhi Queer Pride Committee; Nitin Karani, editor of Bombay Dost; and Harish Iyer, pioneer of the 'Friends of Gays', Mumbai.

Tears of happiness, ecstatic screams of joy and loud celebrations. This was what the Indian gay community woke up to on the morning of 2nd July 2009- a day that will go down in history as the first major victory in the movement for gay liberation in India.

The wording of the 105 page High Court judgement was an astounding testimony in favour of freedom and equality- the lifeblood of the Indian constitution. The document read, *"In our view Indian Constitutional law does not permit the statutory criminal law to be held captive by the popular misconception of who the LGBTs (lesbian gay bisexual transgender) are..."*

It cannot be forgotten that discrimination is antithesis of equality and that it is the recognition of equality which will foster dignity of every individual."

"On top of the moon!"

Nitin Karani, gay rights activist, and editor of *Bombay Dost* was beside himself with joy. "I feel on top of the moon" he said. "Although I was optimistic, but when I got this news at 10:35 in the morning, right on time for the judgement, I was absolutely ecstatic!"

Mayur, a member of the *Delhi Queer Pride Committee*, which organized the gay parade in Delhi this year shared the euphoria. "This is a historic day," he said. "It gives hope- not just to the gay and lesbian community, but to all the oppressed people in all sections of the society. The court laid emphasis on inclusiveness, and that really means a lot"

Harish Iyer, a gay activist from Mumbai and pioneer of the *Friends of Gays*, a group that brings together the families and friends of gay people struck a more cautious note. He said, "Although I'm extremely happy that we're no longer criminals because of our sexuality, we must realize that this is only half the battle won. We have to go a long way further, and so we must behave responsibly." He took exception to the flamboyant celebrations on the streets. "It's good to come out in huge numbers to show our strength, but we shouldn't overdo the



Delhi Gay Pride parade 2009 (Picture: Anahita Sarabhai)

celebrations. I mean smooching on the streets is something which we might do when we're happy, but we should also take into consideration the sensibilities of people around."

Delhi and beyond

Although the ruling is binding only within Delhi, it'll be having a national impact. Mayur cleared the air on the prevailing confusion. "The Delhi High Court judgement is applicable throughout India, as long as it is not contradicted either by another High Court (whereby Section 377 will be reapplied to that state), or by the Supreme Court. Until then, it's the law of the land."

Anand Grover, the lawyer who argued the case for Naz Foundation said in an interview to DNA, "technically, the Delhi HC judgment is applicable only in the territory of Delhi. Law and order is a state subject and only the Delhi government, which was a respondent in this case, is bound by the Delhi HC order. The other states were not party to the case. However, the judgment has immense persuasive value. It can be cited in courts across the country to seek relief. Also, if the government decides to challenge the order in the Supreme Court then the apex court's ruling will be the law of the country."

Social impacts

Cynics have been wondering what use can law be when society is still so stringently intolerant of gays. But Nitin dismisses such concerns by saying, "A beginning has been made by this ruling. It'll start impacting the society now. The change will come slowly, but a beginning has been made, and that's important."

Even Harish said that change in society "will happen." He said, "this is an ongoing battle, and it's only the first step achieved. The ruling will now open a public dialogue on this issue, which will only help in furthering our cause."

Mayur said that "we have now forced our way to the headlines. And we need to maintain this momentum by continuing with our struggle, spreading awareness and coming out in larger numbers."

HIV treatment: a ray of hope

According to Nitin, the impediments Section 377 was causing to HIV/AIDS treatment and

prevention was one of the basic reasons why the court struck down the law. "Many professionals who spoke up in the court argued how it had become nearly impossible to work among gay men for HIV prevention measures because of the law."

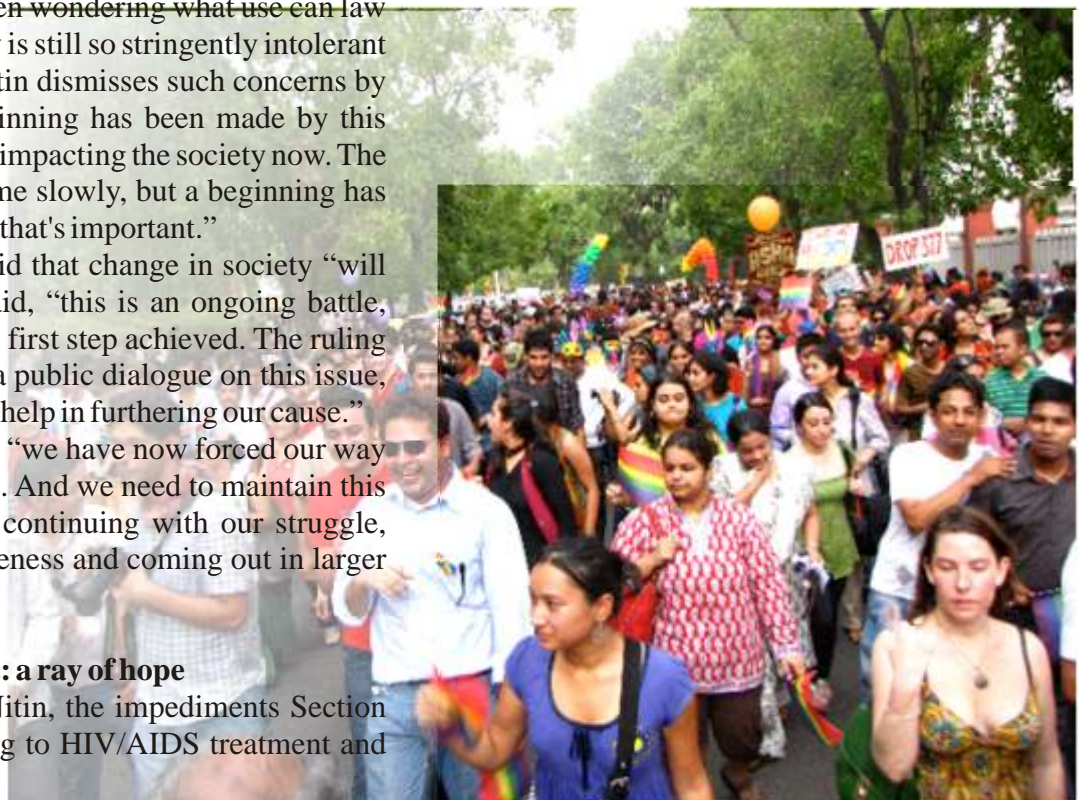
Mayur said that one the main problems that used to arise earlier was during the counseling of HIV infected persons. "When asked about how they got the disease, they had to lie, as gay sex was illegal. But now that it has been legalized, they can be more honest about themselves to their counselors and doctors."

The next step?

"Hate crime legislations and anti-discrimination laws," says Nitin. Harish said, "the courts have deemed us normal, now it's our turn to prove ourselves so." He cautioned that "now on, we're going to face lots of straight questions from straight people. And to answer them, we have to be responsible enough. Initial celebrations are just fine, but once they're over, we have to get down to the serious business of reforming our image in the minds of heterosexual people, and try not to be the freaks that they think us to be."

Mayur, quite oblivious to all that serious talk, said with a grin, "The next step? I've no clue! Right now, it's time to party!"

And party we will!



Colours of Pride

Ananya Dhote analyzes the newfound political and social consciousness sweeping across the LGBT community in India and its legal fallouts in the coming five years of the newly elected UPA government.

Smiling faces, sparkling eyes, intrepid voices, statement-making placards...an undulating wave of people, spreading out like colours of the rainbow, walk the streets to shatter all shackles of invisibility, law and convention imposed upon them. Like the essential prisms that trigger this universal dispersion, stand oft repeated ideals inconspicuously true for every human life- honesty and courage.

India's existing, though translucent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community is finally discovering the strength to uphold the premise that diversity is a gift; sexual orientation and gender identity are inherent and cannot be altered. This June, 2009, for the second year in a row, the Indian LGBT community organized Pride Parades in major Indian cities (Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Bangalore) for all queer people and their supportive friends and families. In fact, the Pride Parade is a celebration for everyone, whether lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, hijra, transsexual or straight, affirming our right to be respected.

And deeply rooted within pride parades and LGBT activism lie two important political, social, legal and cultural questions: revocation of archaic section 377 of the IPC and LGBT rights in India. And with the first aim now achieved with the historic Delhi High Court judgment, the community is now looking forward to achieving the second and much larger milestone.

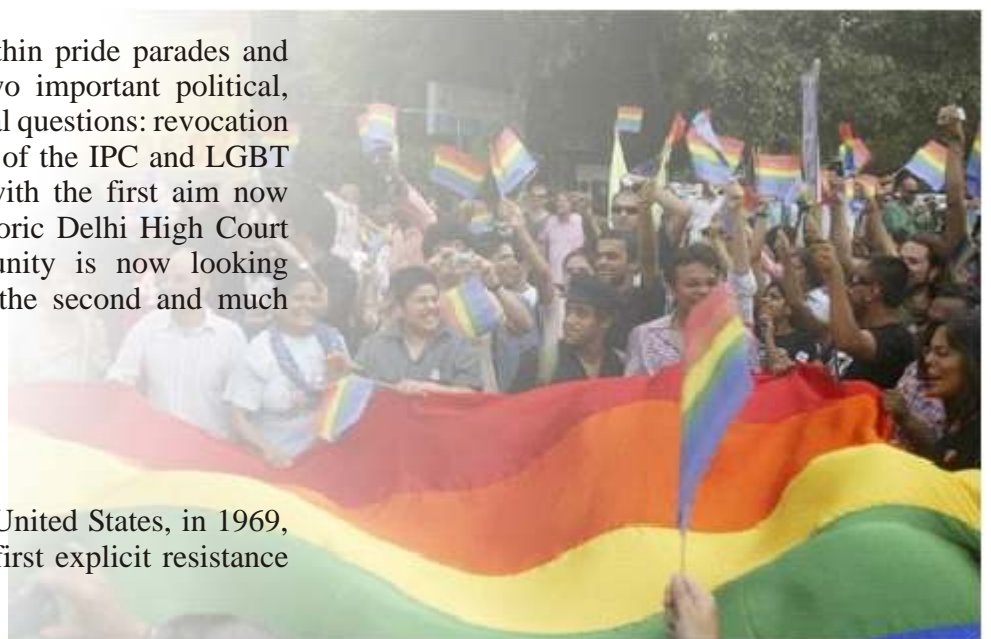
Parading history

Stonewall riots in the United States, in 1969, are often cited as the first explicit resistance

shown by the queer community towards police officers raiding Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village- a neighborhood of New York City, a popular hangout for gay people in those times. It led to the founding of the first homophile (as they were called) organizations in the US, Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance. They coordinated the first anniversary rally on June 28, 1970 to commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion. It did not just grow into a national grassroots movement in the US but even influenced other countries around the world that celebrate LGBT pride.

Akin to US, each nation has a niche of history surrounding the Pride Parade- their evolution and opposition. While the pride parades in Chicago, San Francisco, Berlin, Paris, just to name a few, became institutionalized festivities, on 26 June 1994, on the 25th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines (ProGay Philippines) and Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) Manila organized the First LGBT Pride March in Asia, highlighting broad social issues.

Not to be left far behind, Kolkata initiated the first Rainbow Pride Parade in India in 1999,



Delhi Gay pride parade, June 2008

when a mere group of about 50 turned up while the rest preferred to remain within their shadowy closets. Since 2003, Kolkata's annual pride marches have continued. Last year, in June 2008, Delhi and Bangalore joined in while this year. This year Chennai too held its rainbow flag high. Mumbai too organized its first Queer Azadi marche on 16th August 2008, a day after the country's Independence Day, purely to signify that while the nation attained independence from British in 1947, the LGBT community was still suffering under a 150 year old colonial era law.

Roots and Impacts

While the pride marches seem to be a natural repercussion stemming from years of restriction, neglect, ignorance and persecution faced by queers, its impact has to be gauged on a broader scale spanning social-cultural facets and even, the legal-political spaces.

LGBT social movements around the world converge into common goals that include challenging social constructs of masculinity, femininity and primacy of conventional heterosexual family (heteronormativity). And, it requires knocking the doors of national and international institutions which can develop and implement frameworks aiding in realization of above mentioned goals. Hence, pride parades often lobby politicians,

administrators and civil organizations to gain ground for political goals that include changing laws and policies in order to gain new rights, benefits, and protections from harm.

The Indian Political Debate

Politics in India seems to be a nuclear chain reaction. In a country like ours, politics trickles into myriad branches including religion, faith and morality, regionalism, caste, creed; a single viewpoint that may happen to overlap all these separate and often, contradicting reactions, is stereotyped as a mass mandate that is for the benefit of the entire country. The world's largest democracy should have known that democracy is more than just popular vote.

So, there was no surprise when the Home ministry filed an affidavit which said, "Indian society strongly disapproves of homosexuality and disapproval is strong enough to justify it being treated as a criminal offence even where consenting adults indulge in it in private". It added: "Deletion of the Section can open the flood gates of delinquent behaviour and (can) be misconstrued as providing unbridled license for homosexual acts," and maintained that the section 377 was needed in the IPC to deter sexual abuse and related crimes. There's even little surprise, when BP Singhal from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an independent party in the PIL that is opposing decriminalization of gay sex started his arguments and described



homosexuality as an "evil" exported from western countries.

The high court was hearing a public interest petition by Naz Foundation (it was filed in 2001, following a police raid at the Naz Foundation's office in Lucknow), an NGO seeking abolition of section 377 of IPC.

Thankfully, the former health minister, Anbumani Ramadoss' statement during the 17th International Conference on AIDS in Mexico City that said, "Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes Men who have sex with Men, must go", came at a critical time. Apart from highlighting that the key to overcoming the HIV epidemic is to take HIV services to those on the margins of society, it also swung the health ministry in favor of gay rights. Back in India, he decided to take up this issue with the PM and contradicting the Home ministry's stand on the PIL, he further added, "I fully support protecting children against sexual abuse and treating paedophiles as criminals. But homosexuality must be legalized specially from the point of health issues".

The former law ministry, faced with these contra opinions within government, did make a whispering mention of discussing this issue with health and home ministries, to decide whether section 377 can be scrapped to make way for a new law on sodomy which may not discriminate against homosexuals. Though, by and large, during hearings on the PIL, the government's Additional Solicitor General PP Malhotra said that the matter was 'beyond his hands' and that he would have to wait for the decision of the Cabinet. Finally, the government went ahead with the 'moralistic' arguments of the Home Ministry.

The High court bench comprising Chief Justice A P Shah and Justice S Muralidhar raised some commendable legal arguments in favor of gay rights. Asking for scientific proofs and highlighting WHO reports, they said that while homosexuality may be a vehicle that spreads AIDS, it is not a disease in itself. They added that concerns of such marginalized groups should be appropriately addressed, though a straightforward ban on gay sex would do nothing to tackle the issue of HIV spread in India. They further refuted right wing VHP's claim that gay sex causes bodily harm.

General elections 2009 and the newly constituted law ministry took the issue forward presumably in a positive direction. In an interview to a television channel, law minister Veerappa Moily indicated that the government may do a rethink on the controversial Section 377 of IPC that criminalizes private consensual sex between adults of the same sex. But even before the Government, which started facing virulent opposition from Muslim and Christian religious groups, among others, could reach a consensus, the Delhi High Court declared Section 377 unconstitutional on 2nd July.

While the government at present shows its blink-and-you-miss-it support for LGBT rights, the community itself is far more enterprising. This fact is quite evident with Pride parades, online activism, LGBT magazines, notable gay activists, gay themed movies, newspaper reports, TV documentaries, and even alternative law forums to address legal issues faced by queer people. The ICMR (Indian Council for Medical Research) seems to be light years ahead when it comes to acknowledging the impact that its recent regulation may have on gay rights. Chapter 3 of the ICMR draft guidelines which deal with Ethical Considerations and Legal Issues states: "There would be no bar to the use of ART by a single woman who wishes to have a child, and no ART clinic may refuse to offer its services to the above, provided other criteria mentioned in this document are satisfied. The child thus born will have all the legal rights on the woman or the man." As per a Times of India report, when they drew the attention of Dr Kamini Rao - one of the ICMR Guidelines Committee Members -to provisions in the document which would enable gays/lesbians to beget children, she said, "the right to procreation is fundamental.", rejecting the view that a child raised by homosexual parents would not have a normal childhood.

The Power of One

We may talk of heavy weight organizations and influential individuals coming forward to support gay rights in India, but the real power lies distributed in hands of those masked and unmasked people marching in a big city parade while the crowd both stares and cheers. Or perhaps, many arguments may be silenced by the girls in a far off village who oppose their families and decide to live happily

together...what about the gay man who stood up for himself when his company booted him out for being open about his orientation...and how about socially untouchable hijras who fight elections...

An ocean of such individuals will serve as the driving force behind any queer friendly policy that may see light of the day, sometime in the future. And may the future be painted with pride, a pride not in our sexual orientation, but rather a pride in our courage that challenges all social conventions, a pride that tolerates hate and discrimination and a pride that inspires millions to stay true to their loving hearts.

As a mother, I know that homosexuals cannot biologically reproduce children; therefore, they must recruit our children.

Anita Bryant

As long as society is anti-gay, then it will seem like being gay is anti-social.

Joseph Francis

Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

Dr. Seuss

Chennai's open arms for the 'criminals in love'

M*anorathan* discovers the dark underbelly of Chennai in a rendezvous with male sex workers at Marina Beach- the city's gay cruising spot.

Yearnings have been the cause of ruins of all awful extents from times immemorial and they hold their legacy even now. The paperboy early in the morning greets us with his anxious eyes as we rub our slumbering ones, to earn that extra buck while that late night news reader wraps up the day with his good night (with a perceptibly missing yawn), a desperate call for a break that is needed. In the middle are we, stirred in emotions, I mean, longings, living our day, planned or unplanned, on a balancing gesture, stretching and un-stretching ourselves to meet their demands.

Blinded by the vapoury yearnings, which descend on us with vengeance for demands unfulfilled, rarely are we permitted to desire a breather from an abundance of air, purified of its stagnant redundancy. Such is life, we yell, giving names like commitments and responsibilities for things driven by an inner desire, with exceptions when one still has the shallow and pretentious selflessness to fight with. Violent would the attempts to disrupt this routine be, as the fight is with oneself, for the same one, when both his selves speak for their parts, proving just. And mine were less crazy in no particular way one can ever come up with! Your browser may not support display of this image.

Night times are my cathartic moments, especially on the roads, when the lights on those ambitious billboards flicker in vivid hues (with

the maddening vehicular traffic already asleep), the only signs of life after a busy day. These billboards, no longer the advertisers, now speak of mysterious, flamboyant dreams, giving direction to my aimless walks, with my eyes upturned, catching their flicker and missing nothing, making out images not being seen. The small town boy that I was, Chennai was a network of such streets, unexplored, when I had to relocate here for my under graduation. Let conservative, chicken-hearted, closed circuited (one of my favourites), etc., be the tag words glued to Chennai, but my night trips never had anything to do with these boring modifiers.

It was on one such night did my stress worn feet drag me to the Marina beach, to that gays' corridor, squeezed in between the historic government buildings and the polluted sea waters beyond a massive expanse of heavily littered sand, with one most remembered chief minister resting peacefully at its side. It's a cruisers' spot in all aspects, religiously revered as 'The sanctuary for Chennai gays' by one petty artist I came across. With the air saturated with stench caused by the wayside uriners, boldly misguided by the 'men only' ambience, I was quite uncomfortable but then I was partly pleased as this place was the closest actualization I could ever achieve of those parks in movies that men frequent, more in night.

A shady place as it is, why beatify myself by making me the cold researcher, for I was no less a hooker than them, hooking up with the unknown, with no less wants. Everything is decided by a stare over here, and I did know the tricks to avoid being misunderstood as encouraging. Those lusty stares from beefy hunks, enquiring ones from the middle aged (watch out for the pan in their mouths!), timid downwardly stares from the grey haired oldies

and to top it all, the winners were those desperate, deadly stares, determined to devour you even without a touch! By winners, I mean the most memorable ones and not the actual winning of their pursuit, which is an altogether different story governed not by the magnitude of the stare. Shiny costumes donned by a few, (sex workers, as I heard), add colour to the ageing night, and of course to the wearer.” He is a she! No, but she may not be a she! “, so go the comments as a gang of dandies pass by, followed by one figure draped in a sari, in an ultramodern way, rouged cheeks and wet lips! Cars follow them with an unusually slow speed, suggesting an imminent halt with any sign from the group. A few get picked up, while a few refuse to, returning with their hands busy, setting their hair in place. A few smoke, out of anxiety? Or maybe, just boredom.

Those dandies spotted me and came to me asking, “Time enna?” (What’s the time?). I could see from his watch that it was 1030. After the regular exchanges of nom de guerres, and our fictitious jobs, he then talked about his mansion nearby, hinting his readiness to host me. I didn’t want to just lose him for he sounded quite decent and suggested my wish to be here for a few more minutes for which he obliged. Waving at the passersby, he seemed quite well known to most of the well dressed guys there. It was then that I came. Then came a khakhied guy, and then the hushes and the inactivity, the danger as I smelt! Then the normalcy! One of to know about his part time job that helped to fill the hole his mansion’s rent made on his tiny pocket.

The elusive male sex workers, non-existent to Indian cinema, with not much citation in articles on prostitution in magazines, were just in front of me. These poor young men, obviously leading double lives by choice, seemed to have arrived at a better solution to lead their less lucky lives. And if it’s a question of whether being ‘pleasure-driven or money-driven’, it has something to do with pleasure, for the guy I talked to, made no mention of my

paying him. He was in fact starting to yarn a tale of his love for me, taking my interest as an encouragement! Easy hopes for a simple man, and there, a sign of aspiration! Then were my enquiries about safe sex, and pat came his approval for letting me do him with no rubber. Some people are still into trusting others, no wonder we still have innocent in our dictionary. Maybe, ignorant is the right word! Not that he was ever told, for he did mention about a few people supplying condoms and a meeting stressing the need for safe sex. The change did happen in his thinking, but not in his way of perceiving things. A seventeen year old getting buggered for money, teens fellating stinky old men, gay lovers in the flesh trade together, married men trying to earn some extra money and the list went on, of which my ears could hear no more of! Should the blame be on the unjust dancing of money or on the choice of living of a few? And why should there be any blaming, for they are as proud as any other moneymaker, with regrets attributable to the professions of even you and me? Yearning is the common catalyst here (and of course in every other place), the primitive wheel of its own will, with the protagonists stuck to its spokes!

I got an auto back home from the bus stop nearby, shooing away the desperate bikers, who took me for one soliciting sex! Guilty I did feel, for breaking the heart of that overtly romantic young man, and satisfied was me as I got my share of flattery I was so desperate for

Alternative Community: Queering the Queer

Rohit K Dasgupta reports on the LGBT conference in Kolkata, where participants from India and abroad presented their papers on subjects as diverse as gay politics and gender identity.

Queer Thoughts, the national conference organized by Sappho for Equality which was held on the 10th and 11th April at H.L Roy auditorium, saw a very good turnout. Delegates had come from abroad and other parts of India, either to present a paper or just support the cause. There was some very thought provoking stuff discussed which ranged from Dr Dhar talking about Freud, Lacan and psychoanalysis to Sutanuka talking about polymorphosity and the multiplicity of identity. I presented the first paper of the conference and am glad to say it went off rather well. I spoke about identifying and locating the 'Queer' identity in Popular Indian Culture (which was mainly films). I spoke at length about Fire and My brother Nikhil and also comparing it to more 'mainstream' films like Honeymoon travels Pvt Ltd. and how the identity has changed over time. The queer man from being the ridiculed character in side role

to taking over as the mainstream serious hero. The other papers were quite good too. In particular I like Niluka's paper on Disability and Sexuality in the Sri Lankan context. Also noteworthy was Monidipa's paper on Kari(a graphic novel by Amruta Patil on a lesbian girl) It's important to see how the proliferation of the different kinds of media has given it a wider readership and understanding in terms of both engaging the heteronormative audience and in interrogating the flailing gender theories. Pramada Menon's comments on joining the academic space with the activist's voice was another point worth thinking about. The conference interrogated the muffled silence of



Judges and participants at the Paper Presentation

acceptance, identity, morality and religion that are intertwined together within the tapestry of the Indian gay movement impacting the erotic silence of the closet and the dynamics of a love that we are afraid to speak of. The papers and the speakers spoke about giving shape to the creation of a unique Indian queer identity and in breaking the silent monolith of MSM and WSW.



Stonewall: The Freedom Wars

Ravi turns back the pages of history and looks into the one single most important event in gay history- the Stonewall riots of 1969.

America after the Second World War was a conservative place. The country had had enough of war. Any behavior out of the ordinary was not tolerated. And homosexuality was unthinkable. It ranked right up there with Communism as one of the unmentionables, which a God fearing Christian country could do well without. Things started changing by the end of the decade. In the Sixties, the Civil Rights Movement picked up steam, so did the Counterculture Movement. The LGBT Community had to wait for a seminal event- Stonewall.

Gay bars in the Fifties and Sixties had been dark and dismal places. This heightened the feeling of gay men that they were social reprobates. Raids on bars by the police were common. One such raid occurred upon the

Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969. Usually, the police would arrest the men in drag. This time, the men did not go quietly. They fought back in what would become known as the Stonewall Riots. These riots marked the start of the LGBT rights movement in America and around the world.

The police were known for roughly handling patrons. In one instance, a policeman picked up a woman and heaved her into the back of a police wagon. This incited the crowd to riot. The police were pushed back into the bar. They barricaded themselves inside the bar and called for reinforcements. An uprooted parking meter was used as a battering ram to get to the cops trapped inside. The riot started around 2 am and went on until 4 am. By the time it was over 13 people were arrested, a few were hospitalized and 4 police officers were injured. The Stonewall Inn was damaged and subsequently closed. The riots marked the first time gay people had actually fought back. A sense of urgency was felt after the riots. This led to the formation of societies like the Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Activists Alliance and others. The world has never been the same since.



Musings of a gay Hindu...

Nipun Goyal writes on what it means to be gay and Hindu, and if the two identities can ever be reconciled in a country that's predominantly Hindu, and at the same time deeply homophobic.

What pegged me, a self-confessed Agnostic to dwell upon this issue? The mystical lure of this ancient religion is not the least among them—even as a 21 year old, I continue to enjoy with equal gusto as any other faithful Bengali Hindu the sounds of dhak and the swirls of dhuno during the Durga Poojo aartis. But more important is the fact that despite our trend towards Agnosticism or Atheism, Hinduism holds immense sway over the lives of millions of Indians. And the fact that modern day Hinduism is deeply homophobic leads us to this debate.

What sets Hinduism apart

Unlike Abrahamic faiths, Hinduism is not a monolithic religion. While these religions have a holy book that regulate the follower's beliefs and lifestyles, Hinduism is more of a quest, where the onus is on the individual, rather than on the deity. The Hindu concept of God or Brahma is the omnipresent and omniscient being which pervades time and space, and thus is within each one of us. He does not regulate our lives, but our actions do. It is this emphasis on the individual rather than the religion, as is in the case of Abrahamic faiths that will perhaps hold the key to our questions.

How Hinduism views sexuality

Hinduism sees all forms of desire as a source of

trouble. Sexuality is one of them. It traps you in the cycle of karma and rebirths. But at the same time kaam- or sexual gratification is one of the four aims of human life. How does one resolve this seemingly strange dichotomy? I talked to the president of the Hare Krishna Temple in the Hindu holy city of Ujjain and this is how he explained it- It is obviously not possible to embark on the path to God with worldly distractions agonizing the mind. And what agonizes the mind more than anything else is unfulfilled desire- that may be in the form of material comforts or sexual needs. Hence the need to fulfill our desires before we take refuge in the Lord.

But does that mean there's no place in the spiritual world for the worldly man? Not exactly, he says. If one regulates his/her life as per the scriptures, both material and spiritual needs may be fulfilled simultaneously. Now here lies the catch- what constitutes such behaviour? Hindu scholars have interpreted it as a monogamous heterosexual married life. Some of the orthodox even saying that even within marriage, only sex for the sake of procreation is acceptable. So where does that leave gay and lesbian people? Indeed, what about the promise of allowing the believer to satisfy all desire?

Hinduism and Homosexuality

Now let's come to the question of what our scriptures say of homosexuality. I remember tickling with mortification and at the same time feeling a chill run down my spine as I watched B. P. Singhal, the Sangh ideologue ranting against gay sex on a televised debate on the issue. Watching him, I also recollected my recent trip to the Konark Temple, where our guide had shown us, among other things, a relief showing two women in a homosexual embrace. Mr. Singhal said the Manusmriti prohibits

homosexual behavior. I did some research to find out how accurate his argument was.

This is what the Manusmriti says on the issue of two Brahmin men having sex-
 "A twice-born man who has intercourse with a male, or with a female in a cart drawn by oxen, in water, or in the day-time, shall bathe, dressed in his clothes."

A ritual bath as a punishment for having gay sex? I wonder if too many gay Hindus would mind that! Also the book says nothing on the issue of non-Brahmin men having gay sex. Here's what it says on lesbian sex-
 "If two kanya (virgin girls) have sex, each must be fined two hundred (panas), pay the double of her (nuptial) fee, and receive ten (lashes with a) rod."

Ruth Vanita, a scholar on this issue points out that here the concern is not about homosexuality, but about losing virginity, because the same punishment is meted out to a man who has intercourse with a virgin girl outside marriage. Two conclusions may be drawn from the findings- One, punishments for homosexual behavior are very minor, especially when compared to punishments for heterosexual transgressions (A Brahmin man is to be executed for adultery). Secondly, one has the liberty to question the authority of the Manusmriti itself as it is not a scripture, but a law book, and laws should reflect the changing times. For instance, the Manusmriti says that a

Shudra (a low caste Hindu) who listens to the recitation of the Vedas should be punished by pouring molten lead into his ears. Would Mr. Singhal agree to that?

On gay marriage

Revivalist Hindu movements like the Arya Samaj strictly define and regulate marriage between one man and one woman. However,



A relief at the Konark temple showing two women in a sexual embrace

the Vedas, from which the Arya Samaj draws its beliefs are much more lenient, defining marriage as a "union of two souls." So while polygamy is ruled out, gay marriages aren't because according to Hinduism, the soul has no sex.

Also, as per accounts in the Kamasutra, committed same-sex couples were not unknown to ancient Indians, though it can never be verified whether such unions were religiously sanctified or secular in nature-



A relief at the Khajuraho Temple showing a monk giving fellatio to a visiting Prince

“There are also third-sexed citizens, sometimes greatly attached to each other and with complete faith in one another, who get married together.”

Contemplation

A Vaishnava preacher I recently talked to termed homosexuality “demonic”. When I pointed out to him that none of the Hindu scriptures censure it, he replied that a silence on the issue is not necessarily an acceptance. If that’s true in this case, how would we explain the homoerotic sculptures on the walls of ancient temples or the abounding references to homosexuality in the Puranas- not sparing even the gods and goddesses? How many Hindu priests today would allow homo-erotic images to adorn their temple walls? Doesn’t the fact that priests in ancient India didn’t seem to mind say something for the tolerance of homosexual people in during those times? And here we have Hindu politicians saying that homosexuality is a western import, unknown to ancient Indians! If anything is a western import, it is without doubt the deep rooted homophobia of modern day Hindus- imposed upon India as late as the nineteenth century by patriarchal and homophobic Abrahamic values, and institutionalized through the notorious Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

As the Gay Rights movement establishes itself in predominantly Hindu countries like India and Nepal, and as the expatriate Hindu community gets exposed to the international LGBT Movement, Hindus will have to question their homophobia and scrutinize their beliefs in the light of both their scriptures as well as modern-day democratic and liberal values, which after all may not be contrary to their own faith.

Bisexuality immediately doubles your chances for a date on Saturday night.

Woody Allen

Did you hear about the Scottish drag queen? He wore pants.

Lynn Lavne

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Every time you don't follow your inner guidance, you feel a loss of energy, loss of power, a sense of spiritual deadness.

Shakti Gawain

Being gay in Pakistan

N*uwas Manto gives a touching personal account on what it means to be gay in a deeply religious and conservative country like Pakistan, where homosexuality is considered a sin and male effeminacy scoffed upon.*

In Pakistan the word 'gay' is synonymous with the word 'eunuch'. It doesn't really matter whether you have a penis or not. One of my friends quite sincerely, in order to identify my sexual orientation, asked me if I get erected and if I ejaculate. Upon receiving a positive response he thereby concluded there is no way that I can be gay. Of course, it doesn't matter if one gets erected while watching gay porn or straight porn. That has nothing to do with his sexuality. Poor Kinsey. Such an easy and traditional method to identify sexuality and he spent years on research!

.But this unscientific approach towards human sexuality is not limited only to my friend, but to a majority of Pakistanis, who view Islam and homosexuality as being mutually incompatible.

It's none of their business what the heck science has to say when it comes to diversity in sexual orientation. What matters is the word of Allah, the Supreme Being. I am not trying to be anti-religion, but anti-Irrationalism. Twenty years ago, it was a rare sight to see a woman driving on the roads of Lahore. Today it's impossible not to see one, or else you are not in Pakistan. But even today if a woman gets divorced, or worse, if she demands a divorce she is considered to be a shame, in the former case, or a slut, in the latter. According to a family friend of mine, those women who can't be good housewives can't be good women at all. So, I guess those men who can't be good husbands can't be good men too. Hey wait! World, we are out of good men in Pakistan!

But of course, men are men. You see, there is no harm if straight men penetrate into the backs of these filthy gay men. After all, they are the ones penetrating, not being penetrated into. In Pakistan there is no concept of diversity in homosexuality: 'Top', 'bottom', 'versatile'. Every gay man is a bottom. I myself, seemed to believe this till I met some who really were not.



Due to lack of knowledge concerning the field of human sexuality, there is a belief that homosexuality is based upon lust, not love. That is the information that heterosexist minds are fed upon. In my country, as I explained before, there is no difference between a eunuch (hijra) and a homosexual man (not gay woman). Therefore if you get into a fight with a gay man there is always the best way to insult him. This most astonishing word that the founders of the Urdu language ever created: Khusra! I have become used to hearing it. During school, because of my effeminacy was made fun of. My family has always been, and I guess will always go on to till I don't change myself, tell me how I should become more manly. How I should talk, walk, speak, eat, hold the glass, and the list goes on. I am told that I can't be open about my sexual orientation because that would bring shame to my family. After coming out and writing openly on facebook about my sexual orientation and my non-religiosity, my brother sent me a furious message from the UK telling me to better mend my ways before he kills me for defaming the name of my father. Of course many homosexuals take their own life! When your family is not supportive, when some of your friends hold on to you (but still view homosexuality as a disease they must tolerate), when many people who are in a process of becoming good friends of yours stop talking to you the very next day after you told you're gay, there seems to be no other way out but to kill yourself.

But then that sort of humiliation is not limited to your enemies only, but also extends to your family. Whenever there is a fight between me and my sisters, they have one word to shut me up. Yes! You guessed it right: Gay. Why am I telling you my story while my task was to inform my Indian friends about the gay subculture in Pakistan? Well, my story speaks for many. However I am still lucky. I know

what gay rights are. I know what I must demand from this world. I know it's okay to be gay, and although I am an Atheist now, I also know that it's okay to be gay and Muslim at the same time. I have done research on Islam and homosexuality to some extent and so I believe that homosexuals can live peacefully in the Islamic world only if the interpretations of the story of Lot are done in a way that is devoid of bigotry and hatred.

But many homosexuals don't know that. They are happy to be gay and perform namaz five times a day as long as there is no mention of homosexuality and the name of Islam together, whether in a homophobic tone, or in that of advocacy. If that happens they are torn between sexuality and religion, both of which are equally important in a man's life. You must not be surprised when I tell you that when I talked about re-interpretation of the Quran in order to reconcile homosexuality and Islam, there is no way they can digest such an idea. How can all the Ulema be wrong? And more importantly, there seems to be such a crystal clear mention of homosexuality as a sin in the Quran. Guess what, there is no word for homosexuality in the book! The words used to describe it are anything but 'homosexuality'. The closest that it comes to is the incident where Lot asks the people whether they would give up the woman that God had given them, for men (his guests, who were Angels in reality subsequently came to inform him of his near destruction). Now there can be various interpretations of that. But even when you ask you anti-gay or confused homosexual friends to quote where in the Quran there is a direct reference to homosexuality, and when they are unable to do so, they find it hard to absorb the information. Okay, I understand. Twenty years of radical anti-gay brainwashing isn't going away in a day or two. But what really piques me is the fact that in order to defend their religion orientated homophobia, my people

would even go on to defy scientific evidence. But not all is bad. More and more people now believe that gays should have rights to a proper life too, although not in a large numbers. Again, as long as homosexuality and religion are not brought face to face, people won't be ready to tolerate homosexuality. Now when homosexuality is discussed in relation to Islam, there is an obvious defensive behaviour. What is really funny is that these same people forget their Allah's divine anti-gay verses when they are offered a blowjob! I have tested at least two guys who went to lengths to explain to me why Allah hates homosexuals. But when I offered to have sex with them, they didn't lose a second to accept it. (Of course I didn't have sex with them. I have some self-respect you know!)

The female homosexual scene is almost non-existent. Lesbians seem to not exist at all. Therefore they can be saved from the general wrath of society when they dress like boys and act like one. There is no concept of tomboyish girls being lesbians, although there is a strong notion that all effeminate men are gays and all gays are effeminate (something that I must admit even I used to believe at one point of time). But returning to the discussion of Pakistani gay woman, I seldom hear about a lesbian, and have never heard about an out and proud one. But my poor sisters suffer from two kinds of discrimination: based upon both gender and sexual orientation.

My Indian friends must have noted that Pakistani Gay sub-culture is not much different from that of the Indian one, nor are our fears, hopes and everyday toils. Therefore, we must erase the international borderlines with love and respect towards one another, and work towards helping our brothers and sisters live a life of bliss regardless of their nationality, sexuality, religion, or ethnicity.

Every time you don't follow your inner guidance, you feel a loss of energy, loss of power, a sense of spiritual deadness.

Shakti Gawain

Everybody's journey is individual. If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that many Americans consider it a disease says more about them than it does about homosexuality.

James Baldwin

Nature or Nurture?

A debate revisited

Maloi takes a thorough look at the major historical theories of homosexuality and the recent trends within the world's scientific community on this ancient debate.

Homosexuality has always been a part of human society, only that it has not been talked about and swept under the carpet since centuries. With the advancements in the fields of psychology, genetics and the allied sociobiologists, human rights activists have become more intrigued about what goes behind homosexuality and so it has become one of the most debated issues in these times. Many scientists have worked for centuries trying to understand the genesis of homosexual behaviour. A lot has been postulated but hereunder is in a nutshell all that has been hypothesised, studied and proven.

Psychoanalytical theories

This theory states that most families of homosexuals are characterized by an overprotective mother and an absent father. Homosexuality may be an expression of

nonsexual problems, such as fear of adult responsibility, or may be triggered by various experiences, such as having sexual relationships with members of one's own sex at an early age that prove to be very satisfying. Arguments regarding the roots of lesbianism include disappointing heterosexual love experience, a father who displays distaste for men who express interest in his daughter, and memories of abusive relationships with men. It is believed that all humans were born bisexual in nature, and from this state, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both heterosexuality and homosexuality developed. One or more of the following factors is unusual in some respect in the childhood of homosexuals: parental hopes before birth for a child of the other sex; difficulties at birth; slight anatomical differences between identical twins leading to a special attachment of one child or the other to their mother; strength of the relationship between father and child; competition for the affections of the mother; the individual's birth order, parental age at birth, and family size. Homosexuality has also been linked to childhood opposite sex-dimorphic behaviour, such as effeminacy in boys. However, such behaviour is not observed in all pre-homosexual children while it is also seen in some pre-heterosexual children. It is quite possible that, rather than being causative of adult sexual orientation, such behaviour is the manifestation of an innate predisposition towards homosexuality. Researchers have provided evidence that gay men report having had less loving and more rejecting fathers and closer relationships with their mothers, than non-gay men. Key factors in the development of homosexuals were "paternal attachment, introversion, and neurotic characteristics."

Genetic hypothesis

Xq28 is the locus on chromosome X that carries the homosexuality trait

Homosexuality arises through the interaction of particular genetic propensities with specific rearing environments. The genetic theories of sexual orientation attempt to show that it is possible that homosexuality can be sustained in



a population through purely genetically controlled processes which have been subject to the pressures of natural selection.

The two most popular hypotheses in this field are those of balanced superior heterozygote fitness and of kin selection for altruistic behaviour.

Briefly, the former hypothesis supposes that phenotypic homosexuality is the result of homozygosity for recessive 'homosexual' genes. If a heterozygote, possessing one 'homosexual' genetic allele and one 'heterosexual' allele, is phenotypically heterosexual, and more reproductive than an individual who is homozygotic for the 'homosexual' alleles, then the heterozygotic combination will be preferentially selected in future generations. In this way, the 'homosexual' genes are preserved. This explanation may seem implausible; for one thing, it hardly seems likely that only a single, major gene is involved in determining sexual preference. However, various genetic concepts (incomplete penetrance, epistasis, etc.) may be utilized to expand the hypothesis

The key to the kin selection hypothesis is that it does not matter how one's genes are passed to the next generation, as long as they are. Siblings share, on average, 50% of their genes. Therefore, if an individual shows altruistic behaviour towards its siblings which results in an increased likelihood of the siblings leaving or raising offspring, then that individual is, in effect, favouring its own success. Although it is hard to see how such a process could operate in modern society, sociobiology concerns itself with how behavioural traits have evolved and been selected from primitive societies to the present day. It has been suggested that, in primitive societies, homosexuals may have formed a 'sterile caste' which could devote itself to helping mothers to rear their young

Neurohormonal hypothesis

The early fixation hypothesis includes research into prenatal development and the environmental factors that control masculinization of the brain. Studies have concluded that there is empirical evidence to support this hypothesis, including the observed differences in brain structure and cognitive processing between homosexual and heterosexual men. One explanation for these differences is the idea that differential

exposure to hormone levels in the womb during fetal development may block or exaggerate masculinization of the brain in homosexual men. It is proposed that sexual orientation is primarily determined by the degree to which the nervous system is exposed to testosterone, estradiol, and to certain other sex hormones while neuro-organization is taking place, predominantly between the middle of the second and the end of the fifth month of gestation. Complex combinations of genetic, hormonal, neurological, and environmental factors operating prior to birth largely determine what an individual's (adult) sexual orientation will be.

The concentrations of these chemicals are thought to be influenced by fetal and maternal immune systems, maternal consumption of certain drugs, maternal stress, and direct injection.

Recent developments

While the theories of psychoanalysis, as espoused by Freud are fast losing credibility along with his other theories, alternative ones that suggest a biological origin of sexual orientation is now gaining a consensus among the scientific community, exactly what gay activists have been rooting for as they believe that society would be more pre-disposed towards accepting gays if it's proved that they are born that way.

A Swedish study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal suggests that the brains of gay men and women look like those found in heterosexual people of the opposite sex.

According to the report, in heterosexual men and gay women, there were more nerve "connections" in the right side of the amygdala, compared with the left. The reverse, with more neural connections in the left amygdala, was the case in homosexual men and heterosexual women. The research team said that these differences could not be mainly explained by "learned" effects, but needed another mechanism to set them, either before or after birth.

"If you're gay, you're born gay"

Your browser may not support display of this image.

Born gay?

On this, the BBC reported-

'Dr Qazi Rahman, a lecturer in cognitive biology at Queen Mary, University of London, said that he believed that these brain differences were laid down early in foetal development.

"As far as I'm concerned there is no argument any more - if you are gay, you are born gay," he said. "The amygdala, he said, was important because of its role in "orientating", or directing, the rest of the brain in response to an emotional stimulus - be it during the "fight or flight" response, or the presence of a potential mate.

"In other words, the brain network which determines what sexual orientation actually 'orients' towards is similar between gay men and straight women, and between gay women and straight men.

"This makes sense given that gay men have a sexual preference which is like that of women in general, that is, preferring men, and vice versa for lesbian women."

That may be true, but it's still some time before we gear the final word on this debate.



Everybody's journey is individual. If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that many Americans consider it a disease says more about them than it does about homosexuality.

James Baldwin

Gay and lesbian people fall in love. We settle down. We commit our lives to one another. We raise our children. We protect them. We try to be good citizens.

California Sen. Sheila Kuehl

After California Senate approved gay marriage bill AB849

Gay people, well, gay people are EVIL, evil right down to their cold black hearts which pump not blood like yours or mine, but rather a thick, vomitous oil that oozes through their rotten veins and clots in their pea-sized brains which becomes the cause of their Nazi-esque patterns of violent behavior. Do you understand?

Trey Parker and Matt Stone

From South Park, spoken by Mr Garrison

Living with HIV

Alan Lee speaks with HIV experts on the implications and treatment of HIV. Also, at community and individual levels, how we can expect to look at the future of AIDS treatment and prevention, as well as our own responsibilities.

A recently published study contains some very good news for people living with HIV. It suggests that the life expectancy for a person newly diagnosed with HIV, with no symptoms, has jumped from seven years to 24.

This changes everything. Most experts agree that HIV infection is no longer a death sentence. Instead, it is a chronic, long-term disease. Before 1995, a newly infected person faced the near-certainty of dying with AIDS. Today a newly infected person can look forward to 24 years -and potentially much more! - of living with HIV.

We spoke with three HIV experts about this change, and about what it means to people living with HIV today.

Let's start with a little history.

1995: The Year Everything Changed

Prior to 1995, there were no effective treatments for HIV. But in 1995 the first protease inhibitors were introduced, and doctors discovered that a combination of three or more HIV medications could stop HIV in its tracks. The new combination treatments were called HAART - Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy - and the results were dramatic! People who were days away from death came back to life.

"I've been involved with HIV since early medical school," says Rick Stryker, MD, a Clinician and Regional Director for Abbott Laboratories' Global Antiviral Team. "When I first started doing this, I would have dozens of patients in the hospital, many with a poor prognosis. We didn't know enough about HIV to successfully treat them. I could tell you many sad stories about patients - including personal friends and even a family member - who passed away before effective treatments were found."

"Everything changed overnight in 1995 with the first protease inhibitor," Dr. Stryker continues. "In the beginning of 1995, most of my patients were in the hospital. That all went away within a year. And things have continued to improve with the availability of newer and better treatments."

The Diabetes Comparison

Gary Thal, MD, Director of Medical Affairs for Bristol-Myers Squibbs, compares HIV to another chronic long-term disease: diabetes. "The typical person with HIV needs to think about how to manage a chronic disease for the rest of their life, as they would with diabetes," Dr. Thal says. "For most patients in the developed world, HIV is no longer a death sentence. But it's certainly not a trivial disease or anything to be cavalier about. It's not easy to live with HIV, just as it's not easy to be a diabetic. But it is doable. Patients need to make that commitment to manage it."

Dan Seekins, MD, Director of Efavirenz and Nucleoside Agents for BMS in the US and globally, agrees with the diabetes comparison. "Yes, I think it's fair to compare HIV to diabetes," Dr. Seekins says. "You see the same thing with diabetes as you do with HIV: people who eat right and take their medications do well,



and those who don't, don't. So I think that's a pretty fair analogy."

Getting your full 24 - and more!

What does it take to make sure you get your full 24 years, and even more?

"Seek treatment early, be fully adherent and have a good partnership with your physician," says Dr. Stryker. "The adherence part is absolutely critical. Studies show that patients who take their medication 95 - 100% of the time have the best prognosis. It drops off fairly sharply after that. Even after years and years of undetectable viral load, if something changes the virus can and will escape rather quickly."

Dr. Seekins also stresses the importance of adherence. "Medicines don't work if patients don't take them," Dr. Seekins says. "People feel better, they're working again and dating again, and they forget to take their pills. That's the biggest mistake you can make."

"Pick a treatment that fits your lifestyle," Dr. Seekins continues. "Make sure it's something you can commit to. That involves understanding your treatment options and what you're going to have to do as a patient to really get good results."

And don't overlook the obvious: "The biggest thing anyone can do to live longer is stop smoking," Dr. Seekins notes. "Moderate exercise also clearly shows a benefit, not only directly but also by lowering your blood pressure and cholesterol."

Hope for the Future

The doctors we talked to all expect that the life expectancy for someone newly diagnosed with HIV can be even longer than 24 years in the future.

"I'm not sure there's any reason why there has to be a more limited life expectancy for people with HIV than without," say Dr. Thal. "We're not there yet, but over time there's no reason someone with HIV shouldn't have a normal lifespan. It will require getting people into the system earlier, patient commitment, continued research, and continuing to identify optimal ways to treat. Of course, as long as there are patients who are not compliant or don't have access to health care, their life expectancy is going to be limited and that will contribute to the overall demographics of the epidemic."

"Chances are excellent that lifespan will continue to improve," echoes Dr. Stryker. "Most of the increase is due to improved management and much better treatments that are capable of fully suppressing HIV and essentially putting someone into a remission

state."

"People should not be lured into thinking that HIV is not a big deal - that they can do whatever they want and we have the resources to pick up the pieces if they get infected," Dr. Stryker adds. "Prevention is much better than treatment. That said, a patient who is really willing and able to fully participate in treatment can have a really excellent response. There's every reason to believe many people will live a normal lifespan well beyond 24 years."

Responsibility to the Next Generation

All of the doctors we spoke to agreed that the reported increase in life expectancy for people with HIV is a great thing - but they also cautioned against complacency.

"Not to diminish the good news," said Dr. Thal. "But it's important for the general population not to become complacent about this disease, not to diminish their efforts at risk-prevention. We can't allow this to let us turn our back on HIV. We can't say, 'OK, we've solved this one, now let's move on to the next disease of the week.'"

"If people with HIV stop reminding the rest of us, it could become a forgotten disease," Dr. Thal continues. "If we become complacent about it, what happens to the millions of people outside the developed world who are still 20 years behind us?"

"Unless we keep working on it, the 24 years won't turn into 34, then 44, then 54. We need the reminder that, yes, you're living longer. But you're not living disease-free."

A Cure?

Dr. Stryker says, "Early in the HAART era there was a lot of optimism that a combination of drugs would be able to eradicate the virus fully. But no one has completely eradicated HIV with the currently available drugs. There are sanctuary sites in the body where the virus can hide out. We'll need new therapies that can eradicate the small amount of virus that remains in patients who are fully suppressed."

"Is that around the corner? No. But it's a goal that's out there for the future."

"A cure is an elusive goal and one that will take a long time to achieve," agrees Dr. Thal. "The virus mutates itself and can escape the current medications. I hope that a cure is possible. I think it's possible. In the short term? I doubt it. But you never know before you find something that you're going to find it. We're looking for both a cure and a preventative. We didn't eradicate polio by curing it, we eradicated it by preventing it." (Positive Health)

Profiles

***Monish** is one the key members of the Delhi Queer Pride Committee, and he talked to **Pink Pages** about the recently concluded Gay Pride celebrations in Delhi, that not only saw a massive turnout, but also attracted a lot of media attention.*

How was the parade this year different from the one last year?

Lots of other minority groups turned out for support. For instance, women's rights activists. There was significant celebrity presence. Also many participants came along with their parents and straight friends who support them.

There were fears that the parade could be sabotaged by some right wing groups. Were you nervous?

There were no threats as such. Whenever you take a new initiatives, you have to be cautious. But we were definitely not nervous.

What was the exact turnout?

More than three thousand.

That's a huge number. Were you expecting that?

We definitely were. Infact had it not been for the sweltering heat, more would've come. By the time the parade ended, everybody was drenched in sweat.

What was the response of on-lookers?

Mixed, but mostly positive. The media was very supportive. As I was walking with the marchers, I heard one onlooker say it's fine as long as they don't harm us. But there was also another lady who said "We should keep an eye on these parades, even our children might be one of them!"

The parade generated a lot of media attention. Do you think most of it was positive?

Totally positive. Both the print and electronic media gave us significant coverage and media reports were all very sympathetic to our cause. **But don't you think much of the coverage was only by the English media?**

I wouldn't say so. I've seen reports in Hindi newspapers too about the parades. Though they took time to catch up with it, they eventually did. Their coverage may not be as positive, but the Hindi media is certainly not ignoring us any more.

Finally, what is your reaction to the historic Delhi High Court judgement declaring homosexuality legal?

It's a historic day, a victory for humanity I'd say. It's a great step forward in the road to ensuring human rights to all. However this is just the beginning of a long struggle. Our next step would be to try and legalize adoptions by same sex couples, anti-discrimination laws and domestic partnerships for gays.



More than just friends!

A*nahita Sarabhai discusses gay love and bonding- in a society that's still not used to same-sex relationships. Also how is a gay relationship different from a straight one anyway?*

“.....so what's it like for you guys? It's basically just an intense friendship right?”

Ummm. No.

One of my closest friends asked me this the other night. She is an educated, exposed, articulate woman and has been a friend of mine for a long long time. I can safely say she is not a homophobe. Why then, would she assume that my relationship with a woman is just an intense friendship, while hers with a man, is clearly so much more?

We live in a homosocial nation. Men and women hold hands in public all the time –with their friends of the same gender, that is. In most other countries, this would imply an inordinate proportion of homosexuals. But in ours, homosexuality has nothing to do with it. We hold hands to symbolize our friendship. We hold hands, to fulfill our human need for physical affection. One that, as we all know, we cannot entertain in public with members of the opposite sex. So it's okay for men to hold hands with men and women to hold hands with women, and when it comes to talking about sex... ah! There's the rub!

Now, when we talk about queer sex, what it boils down to is a lack of imagination really! Most people in India do not want to/ cannot imagine two people of the same gender doing more than hold hands or hugging. They cannot picture the potential of sex there – why would they? When even sex between a man and a woman is already so 'taboo'?

So in answering my friend's question, let me try and explain why a queer relationship is not

just an intense friendship. For one thing, we have sex! Unless straight people have redefined what it means to be platonic, sex is not part of a friendship. Intense or otherwise. Some people though, would not consider our physical relationships to be Being that sex is most often defined as an act between a man and woman. But trust me, those of you out there who adhere to this definition, you don't know what you're talking about!

What is sex besides a physical embodiment of your connection to another person? The most primal of human instincts, whether it is in the context of a committed relationship or a one night stand, sex is about two people who choose to express their attraction physically. The object (for those of us who are not bound by religious beliefs here) is the orgasm. The climax. The intimacy it creates. The bond it symbolizes. So,



Relationships

if all those conditions are met, sex it is. And we have it.

So if we have sex. And we have love. And we have commitment. What makes our relationships any different from those our straight friends have? What is the missing element in our relationships that have them classified as 'intense friendships'?

I hope my friend gets her answer here. That she is able to get past socially defined conventions about relationships and human connections. Society can and so very often does limit our freedom of thought. We do not know why we believe so many things we think we do. Even the most educated and open minded of us. There are no simple solutions to this. Time, is the best one. Time and the desire to understand and accept. To ask the questions. And then, once we have asked them, to really listen to the answers.



God has given you one face, and you make yourself another.

William Shakespeare

Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is that man who hides one thing in his heart and speaks another.

Homer

heterosexual-pride day, why do you need a gay-pride day?" I remember when I was a kid I'd always ask my mom: "Why don't we have a Kid's Day? We have a Mother's Day and a Father's Day, but why don't we have a Kid's Day?" My mom would always say, "Every day is Kid's Day." To all those heterosexuals that bitch about gay pride, I say the same thing: Every day is heterosexual-pride day! Can't you people enjoy your banquet and not piss on those of us enjoying our crumbs over here in the corner?

Rob Nash

Ask Your Peer Queer!

*Our psychologists and medical professionals reply to your personal queries on a whole range of issues...
(You can mail your questions to agonyaunt@pink-pages.co.in)*

I'm a 21 year old guy and still confused about my sexuality. I've always been attracted to boys but also enjoy the company of girls, and like the cute ones... I wonder if I'm bisexual.. isn't such confusion at this age strange? How much time will I take to decide?

If you ask me, it's never too early or too late. Everyone has their own way of coming out and discovering who they are, what they like and how they want to be. How much time should it take for one to decide? Well, I can say (at the risk of sounding ridiculous at first) take your entire lifetime, if necessary!

Don't fall into the trap of labels, categories and definitions. Some of us know exactly what category we fall under because we feel a certain way without any doubt or contradiction (just like a majority of our population wouldn't have any doubt being attracted to someone of the opposite sex), and that's great. As for those of us who don't know exactly what we want, that's alright too. Don't stress out. Follow your heart, and your gut. If you are attracted to a man, approach him. If you are attracted to a woman, well, approach her too! (just not at the same time if possible!!)

At the end of the day we all know, it's about the person, not their gender. So relax look at the up side, your dating pool just grew a whole lot bigger...!

I'm a lesbian and would like to know what risks I face from STDs like AIDS

To begin with, I'm really glad you asked this question. Queer health issues are not as discussed as one would like and more

importantly, as one needs. I find the only thing really being discussed in regards to this is the HIV/AIDS precautions, due to its impact on the community at large. As for us, the women... I admit, there isn't much at all.

Our health official who will be helping answer questions such as these says lesbians carry much of the same risk as any other sexually active person for unprotected sex. She should take all the precautions one would otherwise. I suggest, as India isn't really up to speed on these issues, that you do some research online.

Here is a link you might want to check out to begin with, and once on it, put 'safer sex' in the search bar and you'll get what you need!

www.lesbianlife.about.com

Be safe!

I'm gay, age 22, and always keep falling for straight guys, sometimes having occasional flings with them, but of course they leave me in the end for their girlfriends. I'm always left shattered and lonely.

Hey, I hear you, and if it's any consolation, you are in very good company!

Unfortunately, we all do it. Even when we know what lies ahead, we let ourselves get caught in the same situation. And yes, we try and tell ourselves that this one is different, and he/she really loves me etc. etc...! But the truth is, more often than not, they leave us anyway!

So the question is, why? The two most common reasons I find for this are, 1. Because they are scared about the repercussions of people finding out, and scared to think they themselves are gay in fact. Reason 2. (Harsher as it may be) More and more teenagers and young adults are looking to experiment when it comes to exploring their sexuality. It has become a part of self-discovery and/or a 'cool' thing to do, not to mention that being queer (In India especially at the moment) carries the appeal of the 'forbidden

fruit'. Either way, there isn't much you can do about it. It is the individual's choice/ point of view/ circumstance/ personal issues amongst other things, and well, you can't control who you fall for. So I guess all one can do is, learn from each mistake and experience, enjoy the times when it's good, be careful with yourself and don't give your heart away TOO easily.

PS. Yes, I know, easier said than done!

I'm 20, and into this relationship since the past 6 months, and already feel the weight of it. I'm supposed to be 'committed' but find it now increasingly difficult to remain faithful. Honestly, I'm getting bored of my boyfriend. But he really loves me and I feel that if this relationship can't work out nothing ever will.

First of all sweetie, lighten up!! For a young fella of your age you sound awfully glum and despondent!

Secondly, you're only 20! Don't be too hard on yourself for not wanting commitment. There is a long way to go before you need to start thinking about any kind of long-term commitment! You have so much to explore and discover about yourself, in more than just this aspect of your life, so maybe you should try and just 'be' for a while. Take a break and a breath of fresh air. Spend some time just on your own to remember what that feels like too. What will come of this break, we will see. Maybe you will enjoy and realize you like just 'being' for now! Or maybe you will realize how much you have gotten used to your partner's presence, and find that you miss that constant affection and love. Which ever it is, follow what feels right. If you aren't happy, you won't be able to make him happy either. So maybe spend your 'on break' time to think about what commitment means to you. And of course, what is it that makes you happy. Commitment does not ensure happiness. So figure this stuff out in order to know yourself.

In the short term though, talk to your partner. You never know, he might be going through the same thing you are (or will at some point). As human beings, we tend to be afraid of anything that will confine or constrain us. You just have to decide if the relationship is worth the effort of dealing with your fears. If it isn't, be honest with your partner, and allow both of you to get on with your lives, on whichever path you

choose.

I'm 22 and recently came out to my mother. She's shattered, to put it mildly. She still thinks it's all just a phase and worried that I'll be ostracized by society. She wants me to get into a marriage of convenience with a lesbian and never tell anyone that I'm gay. How do I convince her?

Sounds to me like your mother is just really scared for you, and with good reason.

Here are a couple of things I think you should do, and I promise they're all tried and tested! Firstly, give her some time to get used to the idea of you being gay and knowing it's real. Use this time to get the 'it's a phase' idea out of her head and express your appreciation and understanding with regards to her worries. From now on regularly remind her of two things; one, how important it is to you that she accepts you as your true self and two, how much you need her support and intend on giving her all of yours, when she needs it. (Think about it, she is probably as worried about what the implications of this will be on her and her world. That's scary for her too, so tell her you are there for her at all time and that you wish it didn't have to be this hard on her.)

Secondly, once you feel she is more at ease with the topic at hand begin talking about it to her, in a matter of fact, conversational kind of way. Make it normal for her, because it is to us. Tell her about the various support groups, your gay friends, upcoming pride and everything else that will allow her to realize there is a whole gay world out there and you are not alone in this fight.

Lastly, get her to see that it's not about wanting to flaunt your sexuality, but about being allowed to be yourself and happy, openly. About having the same rights as any other human being, including the right to choose who you love. I truly believe that in the end, the thing most important to our parents is our happiness, so let her know that being gay is who you are and even if it comes with a fight, happiness and love make it worthwhile. If you can get her to see why you would rather pick living your life truthfully and happily, fighting for your freedom and happiness, over living it in the darkness, unhappily but without struggle, I think you guys will be fine!

Planes and Parachutes

Vicky

One morning when you wake up looking at some blue colour ceiling and then the whole day you started noticing only blue colour objects like the blue sky or Ocean or even your blue underwear or blue color font labels in g4m. Suddenly the world seems, turned blue. I guess it is a kind of colour illusion or colour perception (physics or psychological graduates excuse me for my lack of knowledge).

I was trying to do a recap of my last few years, not surprisingly it was all about being gay. I lived like a gay, spoke like a gay and even started dressing like gay. I hardly even spoken to girls, didn't even watch a good romantic movie which is heterosexual. I have not even gone to a shop if there are no boys in the showroom. Though there is nothing wrong in living like the way as I'm doing, but being an author I should stand out from the world and see things beyond my interests.

Colour illusion or Colour Perception are all the same. Seeing things in a different light is another name. Arjun is my ex-boyfriend who changed his mobile number without informing me just three weeks after he told me he was deeply in love with me. Lately I have received a call from Arjun's old number, I thought Arjun changed his mind and his number too. So with an excitement and moment of madness (one of the weakness of being gay) I took the call, but suddenly Arjun had turned into a sissy, his voice was so feminine and there was some music (violin?) displayed in every sentence he uttered. Then I realized it's not Arjun, the guy (Faizal) who spoke to me is Arjun's friend and he was clueless why he called me. The phone call turned out to be a hilarious one. The guy tried to find out more information about me and what I did with Arjun rather than telling me the purpose of the call or how he got

Arjun's sim card.

There are two kinds of people in the world- the Optimist and Pessimist. The best example of Optimists are American Presidents. They still think that attacking Iraq is an act against terrorism, finally ending up at the receiving end of shoe hits (even after those two shoe throws how Bush manages to escape still amazes me and he smiled at the end of the press meet. Shameless Bushhhhh!). Best example of pessimists are Indians- even though they are living in a strong democracy, they are still hypocrites.

Whenever I read postings on g4m forums, I always feel the same way- why do we criticize everything, why are we being hypocrites all the time, why do we think that criticizing someone personally is our culture and moral right? I remember, when I saw the news about the Mangalore Pub attack I was horrified and anguished (conservatives please note that I'm neither supporting pub culture nor against it, so don't come and tell me that I should not go to pubs. If you do that I will threaten that I'll commit suicide). I guess that was bit pessimistic of me. And then the debate along with Ashok Singhal (BJP leader) and Raghuram (MTV Roadies), where Raghu was literally shouting at the BJP leader, pointing fingers towards him and asking him who is he to say what lifestyle we should choose. Well, that made me feel better, I was optimistic again. I realized both optimism and pessimism is needed. If Wright brothers were not optimistic they would not have invented aeroplanes and then a pessimistic scientist came and invented Parachutes.

Through some of my bad experiences I have taken an oath not to advice people. And once I became a consultant, advising has become my profession. I can't even give personal advices to my friends for free. I believe only in India you can get advices for free, people who hesitate to give water for free will be ready to give free advices, because they believe that they don't lose anything by doing that. One of my friends told me that she did a counting on the advices that she has given in her whole life and when she realized how much time she wasted on that, she

decided to quit that habit of hers. She also told me that she now carefully spends advising time to actually help people. Physical objectives like helping a struggling young man to find a job or buying books for poor children. I promised her that I will join her team and will give my best on the same. My favourite Mother Teresa said helping poor people is neither a social service nor a hobby, it is our responsibility and we are duty bound to help fellow human beings

Note:

Please note that I didn't advice you to stop advising.

I "was" Bi, I "am" Gay!

Aham

"I had been through the straight path, it didn't suit me. So here I am, GAY. Cock sure now! 100% gay." this conversation with one's inner self is what many of us engage in. I have spoken to many people who have walked the "straight" path to discover "finally" that they don't belong to that space. Though scientists have said time and again, that our genes determine our sexual orientation, there always a thought lingering in our minds about "circumstantially imbibed homosexuality."

Though, not all Indian parents discuss sex and sexual preferences at the dinner table, we are given to believe, consciously and subconsciously, that we will grow up to have a happy married life... *husband-wife-kids et al.* We accept this without question, without doubt. And this subconsciously plays up all through our lives. The worldview becomes our view. And that view aligns itself so very befittingly in our being that it sometimes takes eons to excavate our true self from this complex collage of infused attitudes.

I have a friend; his name is "A" - a man who was "successfully" married to a woman. (How I gauge success? Well, he has 2 children. And also, the kids look like him. That's stands testimony, doesn't it?) "A" had a colorful life. He enjoyed the best of both worlds. He was a regular at Gay parties and didn't ever reach late for the very pampering Karva Chowth. He ambled on parallel lanes... and managed it efficiently to ensure that both don't meet even

in the farthest sight. I heard from our common gay pals that he is extremely virile when on the act with them. He also seemed to have settled well with his wife. All was hunky dory with his life until the day he went in a quest of his true self. It looked like a classic case of familiarity breeding contempt. He suddenly didn't like the company of his wife. He was impulsive and repulsive with his kids. "Not that I was in love with a guy" he said "but am just bored of playing to the gallery". Eventually, he ended up with a divorce for reason that was not homosexuality but bigamy. He got a friend of his to play the role of the "other woman" and staged his way out of the marriage. "Why did you marry at the first place", I asked him. He replied "I was bisexual". I was amazed at his matter-of-factly reply. How simple it is to swing both ways and finally



decide which way is yours! "What about the lives of others who are affected by this choice?" I wondered.

I mulled over this puzzling issue for quite some time. I looked for answers outside, whereas actually, the solutions lied within. I did a thorough introspection of my feelings. (Me- an out and about gay man) I was drawn to the age when my older cousin had a fetish for bosoms. He used to narrate the sex episodes with heavily breasted women with utmost passion. Much so, I used to imagine of the woman. This was often coupled with some anatomical responses in my body which result in me adjusting myself to disallow full preview. "Was I straight then?" I wonder. When I turned from boy to man, it was hip to have a girlfriend. Chasing skirts was an everyday quotidian for my group of friends. I followed the troop. Neither did I enjoy what they did, nor did I enjoy aping them. Passing

comments and discussing orgasms about and with the opposite sex wasn't something that I was good at. But still I ended up fooling my colleagues to believe that I am like them-Straight.

It took some time for me to allow my innate sexuality to emerge undisguised. I started interacting with my kind- gay men. That facilitated a greater understanding of the simple issue of sexual orientation that we strive to make complex with stiff mindsets.

I pass not a verdict, but express my understanding... I feel homosexual habits and homosexuality are two different things. There is thick distinction between the two. Let's take an imaginary example, we often hear of handsome groups of gay hostellers. The question that dwells in our minds are "did they become gay after close proximity with other boys?...". (What a great coincidence it would be if they were all gay by birth and met one day at the hostel!) I presume that hostellers, young and libidinous, would feel the void for a woman to satiate their fantasies. Engaging in homosexual acts with peer and near might just be a means to quench this thirst. The person might not be a homosexual, but might be engaging in homosexual acts. This could be well termed as "Homosexual Habit" whereas not the persons innate orientation.

Speaking about sexual orientation, let me take my own example, my first sexual fantasy was not about a person from the opposite sex. As adolescence set in, my hormones naturally reacted to the sight of handsome hunks. I did appreciate the beauty of the opposite sex, but (*without mincing words...*) bulges appealed to me and not bosoms.

I have heard the statement myriad times by people who support gay rights "everyone has the right to choose to be gay". The reality is that "We didn't *choose* to be gay. We were *born* this way."

It takes a lot of courage to take your stand. But nothing's as fulfilling as being what you are.

There are no *bi* lanes to gayness. Let us not let society *bi* the gay.

Why We Must Change?

Nuwas Manto

Right after 9/11, Muslims all over the world started experiencing hatred against their religion. Of course this Islamophobia is nothing compared to the gross homophobia prevalent in most Islamic countries. Westerners find it hard to get over the images of men being stoned to death just because of their sexual orientation. From then to now, Muslim Mullahs have come up with the peace loving verses of Quran, such as 'If you kill one man, you kill the whole humanity.' Some reformists have taken a step ahead and even concluded that Islam has everything against bi-curiosity, and nothing against homosexuality as long as gays don't harm anyone. Yes! The Muslim world is changing. Gradually, but it is changing.

But why am I telling you about Islamic reformation when this magazine is more about Queer lifestyle and health? Because, like Muslims and other groups who are changing to fight against prejudice and unfair treatment against them, so must we. No, I am not enjoining you to go through a reformative therapy! What I am saying is that we must change the negativity entailed by the word 'gay' the moment it is spoken to a straight man. Majority of heterosexuals view homosexuals as 'sexually perverted sex freaks', and homosexuality as an outcome of not being able to have or sustain a sexual relationship with opposite sex. But can we really blame them? What do we expect them to believe about us, when majority of our community is really filled up with 'sex freaks'? How many monogamous gays do we know? How many virgin gays do we know?

On one hand we proclaim 'homosexuality is beyond the issue of sex' and on the other hand we are sleeping around every third same-sex person we can find on the block. What one does in one's room is nobody's business. But then we must also concede another fact: sexual promiscuity is self-destructive. It makes one

view one's same-sex, or opposite sex, if you are gay or straight respectively, as nothing but sexual objects.

Why change your lifestyle for those hetero-idiot out there, you might ask. And the answer is this- Because we need them to cooperate with us, and accept us. No matter how proud we are of our sexuality, we can't deny the fact that we live in a heterocentrist world, and so we need to amalgamate ourselves into their system. For that we must change their pre-conceived ideas about homosexuality and homosexuals. Gays are as normal as any other person. In fact we are more sensitive and humorous than heterosexual men, and we are stronger than a heterosexual woman. We are gregarious and we know what it feels like to be discriminated against. Thus we sympathize with the feelings of other minorities. See, we are so special! But how can we transfer such a message to the other guy, who's straight, and in whose mind anti-gay religious ideas are inculcated? By changing the way he looks at homosexuals. He views them as sex-obsessed men, who failed at seducing women, and thus turned into sinners whom God is going to punish on the last day of Judgement. Therefore, as a community, whether in India or in Pakistan or in America, we must strive to change this almost true notion of heterosexuals against homosexuals. We must start practicing monogamy to show them that sex is just *one* aspect of sexuality. That we are love spreading angels and need to be loved back. That we can fall in love too, though not with opposite sex. That we have certain self-respect for ourselves.

I know of one gay man and one bisexual one, both of whom fell in love with straight men. What did these men do to get their honey's attention? You got it right. They used their body to lure them, which any person would do. So what did the heterosexuals do? You are right again! They used their bodies and fooled them into believing that they loved them. After their hunger was satiated, these gay men were thrown away heart broken. I am sure, you must have come across such stories. Only if these homosexual and bisexual men had thought once

before they got into the bed of heterosexual men, at least out of their self-respect. Thought of whether these heterosexuals deserved them. Thought of what would they do if they were thrown away the way they were. Only if they had made these heterosexuals wait long before they had sex, and then see, if they were emotionally compatible.

It's funny how we lament over the issue of trying to change homosexuals, through at the same time having sex with the opposite sex, since it's all in genes, while we think we can turn heterosexual men and women, homosexual. Rather we turn them into anti-gay bi-curious individuals. So, it's not only about the conception of homosexuals in the society any longer, but our individual self respect.

But on the whole, if LGBT society wants to be considered civilized and decent and be able to be active, it must act as one. It must embrace monogamy, to eradicate the tag of 'sex freak' from the LGBT society. And we can do a lot to then change the concept of Queer lifestyle among heterosexuals. Just see what Aisha Fayyazi Sarwari has to say here about her pre-conceived notions about gays:

"Raised Muslim, I thought homosexuality was a sin. My earliest forum entries still searchable in Google cache, attest to the highly moral, electrifyingly, religion-based view on homosexuality."

And here's what she has to say about it after she had a wonderful openly gay senior in U.S: "My notions got knocked down just as fast when I worked as community reporter under one of the most competent and impressive men who headed the community relations department at KRON 4, CNN affiliate station then in 2003. He was openly gay, often referring to his partner of 7 years with a smile on his face. His partner played the orchestra at Broadway. In the time I worked with him, he covered every community issue, including the one about Muslim Imams with as much conviction as he would others like mounting crime or local pollution. He never used his position to overzealously promote his cause.....Apart from the OTT nude-gay parades in San Francisco that my poor old mother once got stuck in when we went off looking for a Pakistani restaurant, I see no real damage gay and lesbian people can do to the world apart from break down the walls of

prejudice."

We can change so many heterosexuals when it comes to their concerns of homosexuals destroying our societies. Only that we must also change ourselves, so as to break down the walls, built and cemented with the help of abnormally sex oriented notions about gays, which act a preclude to them understanding us, and believing that we can be as natural and healthy towards our society.

I believe *we* must change to change *them*.



Just a marriage or a political statement too?

Coming Out



Coming out to yourself means realizing and accepting that you're primarily attracted to people the same sex as yourself. This 'realization' is the first stage of coming out. Accepting that you are gay or lesbian can take longer.

With time, we realize that these feelings are not just a phase and we have to find a way of accepting them. There is no 'rule of thumb' to say when this point is reached. For some people it happens as teenagers, for others it may happen much later on in life. But how do you get from recognition to acceptance? It helps to talk to someone. But who? And what do you say? You might want to talk to someone who understands what this is like.

Coming Out 'Confidentially'

You might find it helpful to discuss these questions first with a lesbian and gay helpline or switchboard. All these help lines are staffed by volunteers familiar with the types of issues surrounding coming out. There are many such help lines available in major Indian cities today. Your call will be handled with complete confidentiality. There are also many gay, lesbian and coming out sites on the World Wide Web.

Coming Out to Others

Sometimes people come out if someone asks them directly if they're gay or lesbian. Others make a point of pulling people aside and saying, "There's something I have to tell you." If you choose the latter option, ask yourself: "Who's the most open-minded and caring person I know? And who's the least likely to be shocked, threatened or put off?" Many people describe how important it was to first tell someone outside the family.

Whoever it is, make sure it's someone you trust and who you believe to be open minded and supportive. The goal is not to tell for the sake of telling, but not to hide. Tell that person

you have questions about your sexual orientation, or you're trying to come to terms with your sexual orientation, and you'd like to talk. Say you've come to them because you trust them. The more people you can find and be honest with, the better you'll feel.

Testing the Water

You can get a sense of how accepting your friends and family are by the things they say, or don't say, when the subject of homosexuality comes up in conversation. You might try to bring it up yourself by talking about gay issues in the news, or currently popular TV programs which feature gay or lesbian characters - or the debates over equal rights in partnership and the workplace for lesbians and gay men. If your friends' or your family's reactions are positive, chances are they'll be more accepting of you. But keep in mind that it's easier for most people to accept gay men and lesbians in the abstract; it's a bit different when it's 'my son' or 'my daughter' or even 'my best friend'.

Coming Out to Friends

When you're ready to come out to your friends, you may be lucky enough to have some gay or lesbian friends to help you. But heterosexual friends can also be good supporters. Choose carefully as you reveal this fundamental part of yourself. Many gay people find that the friends they thought would be most supportive were the first to drop them, while those who seemed unlikely allies offered the strongest support. Along the way, you might lose a few people whom you thought were friends. But you'll learn many valuable lessons about what the word friendship means.

Coming Out to Family

Sometimes brothers and sisters are a good starting point as they are likely to understand more about being gay or bisexual than older generations. Make sure you understand why you are going to tell them. One of the best reasons to come out to your family is to become

Coming Out Helpline

closer to them. If you have decided to tell your family it may be easier to talk to one parent before the other. You could then ask them for help to approach the other. There are a number of typical responses that parents, particularly, are known to give: "How can you be sure?, I went through a phase like this at your age," "You'll grow out of it, you haven't tried hard enough with the opposite sex," "How can you know at your age?" - and so on. (*The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard*)

If adjustment is necessary, it should be made primarily with regard to the position the homosexual occupies in present-day society, and society should more often be treated than the homosexual.

Harry Benjamin

If gay and lesbian people are given civil rights, then everyone will want them!

Author unknown

As seen on a button

If gays are granted rights, next we'll have to give rights to prostitutes and to people who sleep with St. Bernards and to nailbiters.

Anita Bryant

Delhi High Court legalizes homosexuality

TNN, 2 July, New Delhi

India took a giant, albeit belated, step towards globalisation on Thursday when the Delhi high court delivered a historic judgement to Gay activists celebrate after the Delhi High Court decriminalized homosexuality by striking down section 377 of the IPC, outside the court in New Delhi. (PTI Photo)amend a 149-year-old colonial-era law — Section 377 of the IPC — and decriminalize private consensual sex between adults of the same sex. It is the biggest victory yet for gays rights and a major milestone in the country's social evolution. India becomes the 127th country to take the guilt out of homosexuality. In a judgment that has aroused strong reactions from religious and political groups, the court declared that Section 377 IPC, where it ``criminalized consensual sexual acts of adults in private", violated fundamental rights to personal liberty (Article 21 of the Constitution) and equality (Article 14) and prohibition of discrimination (Article 15).

Upholding the petition filed by Naz Foundation, the court ruled: ``Indian constitutional law does not permit the statutory criminal law to be held captive by the popular misconceptions of who the LGBTs (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders) are. It cannot be forgotten that discrimination is antithesis of equality and that it is the recognition of equality which will foster the dignity of every individual."

“There is almost unanimous medical and psychiatric opinion that homosexuality is not a disease or a disorder and is just another expression of human sexuality," the court observed.

Political parties seemed divided. The CPM welcomed the judgement, while Samajwadi Party said it was totally opposed to it. Both Congress and BJP sought to buy time in order to assess the popular opinion — both said they would have to study the order before commenting on it. BJP leaders like Murli

Manohar Joshi, though, came out in opposition, indicating an emerging left-right divide on the issue.

Thousands participate in Gay Pride parades across India

TNN

28 June

Placards with the words 'We demand Repeal of Section 377' were seen on the famous Marina



Pride parade, Chennai

beach for the first time on Sunday.

There were about 200 people at the first-ever gay pride parade in the Tamil Nadu capital. But the number swelled as the march moved on through the city's streets overturning the perception that Chennai was conservative when it comes to sexuality. Bhuvaneshwar too held its first Pride rally in which more than 150 people participated.



More than two thousand LGBT people and their supporters turned out at the parade in Delhi. Hundreds came out on the streets for the gay pride parade in Bangalore too. Hundreds more joined members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and inter-sex communities, as supporters.

In Bangalore, the marchers gathered at the National College Grounds around 3 pm and spent an hour interacting, celebrating in groups.

A group of foreigners also gathered to enjoy the parade with the local flavour. The marchers, dressed in vibrant colours and wearing exquisite head gear of pink and gold danced to loud thumps of drums and bongos.

In Chennai, the marchers braved the sweltering heat, united by a desire to influence public opinion in favour of a more tolerant society. They included prominent figures from the community such as Kalki, a transgender who runs the Sahodari Foundation and TV chat show host Rose.

"While Chennai is generally perceived to be a conservative society, people here are progressive in their thinking," said Aniruddhan Vasudevan, a Bharatanatyam artist and member of Shakti Center, a collective that aims to foster public dialogue on gender and sexuality in Chennai.

Preparations for the march began a few months ago when various rights organisations came together. The approach of the Tamil Nadu government has encouraged the organizers.

New York marks 40 years of Stonewall riots

NY1

28 June, Manhattan

Gay pride was on full display along Manhattan's Fifth Avenue Sunday as hundreds of thousands of people celebrated the 40th anniversary of the modern gay rights movement.

Hundreds of thousands of people gathered along Fifth Avenue from Midtown to the West Village to cheer on marchers, floats and bands.

Organizers of the parade say the fight is still going on as state lawmakers consider legislation to legalize gay marriage. Governor David Paterson, a long-time advocate for gay rights, served as one of the parade's grand marshals this year.

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn says she was hoping this year participants could celebrate the new law.

"We definitely had high hopes that today would be maybe the most celebratory parade I'd ever participated in and a lot of people had ever participated in. That's clearly not the case. And that's very, very disappointing, there's no two ways about that," said Quinn.

"I'm hoping that in my time, I get to see them legalize gay marriage," said one parade goer. The march began as a gay rights demonstration in 1970 to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.



Open Letter to Mothers of a gay or lesbian child

This is an open letter to mothers who are not in a good relationship with their gay or lesbian children:

My son is gay. I knew that he was gay when I realized that he had too many good things about him to be just one person; I think that he was two years old. His interests were varied, as were his abilities. Not only was he more able to get along with both genders better than most adults, but, as he grew up, he was able to converse on a multitude of subjects and participate in a multitude of activities. Do *not* insert snide remark here. He suffered because of who he was. I didn't know it; he was *that* caring to protect me.

If you are not on good terms with your gay or lesbian child, you and your child will miss out...*you* more than your child. You will not be let in to his or her world and you will not be entrusted with their love. You will not be revered, respected or cared about if you do not know what a gift your child is. The fact that he or she is gay takes away nothing from the priceless life you brought into the world. It is another facet of who your child is and another piece of the magnificent puzzle that is life.

As my father said to my son when my son told him that he was gay, "Grandson, that means as much to me as the color of your eyes." My father was an incredible man, just like my son.

Homosexuality is not a choice; it is part of a human's makeup. Do you really believe that anyone wakes up one day and says to himself or to herself, "I think that, from now on, I will conduct myself in a completely different and largely unacceptable manner. I will make myself become attracted to someone of my same sex and I will prefer things that are confusing to all who love me. I will fight the

urges of my physiology, sexuality and chemistry and do the exact opposite. I want to be someone who is often beat up, harassed and usually dismissed as being less than a human being. I want to be ridiculed and unloved by my parents and disciplined, sometimes unmercifully, for being other than what they had in mind when they created me." Think about that for a few seconds. What in the Universe would be the gain of such actions?

If you have been unsupportive of your child because he or she is gay, you have just plain been unsupportive of your child. If you have had angry thoughts or have chastised or punished your child because of their homosexuality, you have acted against the very essence of life. Your child may very well go on and thrive anyway. However, it will never be because of anything positive that you did on their behalf. It will be in spite of all you have done to bring down the very being to whom you gave life. My son and his partner, Sam, had their commitment ceremony over a year ago. As the most important icing on the wedding cake, they are now legally married. Sam is so amazing! I could not have asked for a better son-in-law!

Every child teaches his or her parents many things. They teach us what a true love really is, how much of a child we always will be and they teach us that the world is a wonderful place.



They bring hope to the world while they bring validation to our existence. They are the children of the Universe...the future...the reason to face another day. Depriving your child of your love, trust, affection and esteem will cause you to wither and die an unfulfilled human; unloved by the very creature who was meant to love you unconditionally. Your days will echo with the laughter that might have been and you will look forward to the night because it brings sleep...and, with sleep, escape from the light.

If you are concerned about what sexual acts take place behind the door of privacy, are you so certain that the acts you perform behind those doors...or even elsewhere...are those which you believe are someone else's business? If you show scorn to your homosexual child, or worse, you have done a crime against nature. Are you certain that it is wrong for two people to make love...*any* two people...more wrong than two people bringing fear and pain to each other? Have *you* ever been cherished?

I hope that I live long enough to see that marriage between same-gender people is accepted in our culture. There are so many people who accept hate between people and murder between people. The old hippie saying of "Make Love, Not War" is more blistering a comment on these times than I would ever have imagined. If you want to lose your connection to the Earth and to your time here, all you



have to do is forsake your child.

Do not get me wrong; there is nothing for *you* to forgive. However, there is much for your child to forgive...if you ever get the chance and if you ever see the light. And this is the most important of all of my...*tales from a broad*.

Bronson's mother,
Conny E. Van Dyke
(from the blog *Tales from a broad*)

In itself, homosexuality is as limiting as heterosexuality: the ideal should be to be capable of loving a woman or a man; either, a human being, without feeling fear, restraint, or obligation.
Simone de Beauvoir

Is life not a hundred times too short for us to stifle ourselves.
Friedrich Nietzsche

Homme a la Homo

Aniket Satam

As we started cherishing the perfect cardigan for coming fall, the fashion calendar has already celebrating the homo-iscious spring 2009. It's going to be fresh and funky. The metro sexual man is going to make a major comeback or wait it is the homosexual hysteria which is on his way to enchant the printemps runways.

Shocking Lego colors will fight with nudes for the pantone thrown. Classic nautical chic look will be challenged by the dare to wear funky dude. The preppy palette gets botoxed with digital printed jungle. It's boutique out there of flowers from exotic Hawaiian hibiscus, to monochrome daisies at D&G. The flaura creped on rich fabrics like satin, micro-knits amplifying the luxe-quotient.

The collection looks are another round of motley of martini hues. Dangerous reds, perfect match of tangerine and turquoise. The nouveau combo introduced is the still grey and butterscotch or say gunpowder with fluorescent yellow both looks delicious and divine clash of contrast. The only flesh seen on the model was the palette of nudes ranging from sand to mocha with tan and blush.

Styling was the new mantra – must have accessories can create a mega battle and divorces this spring. Who says summers are for hookups, coming spring is all about Closet war. its all about flaunting your feminine side, without being pansy.

Who says men on mars don't like pink or say print. Pucci's existence will be on stake guys. It's all about flaunting the Venus in your charts, if you can't be daring to wear a BACKLESS tee, choose a dolman sleeve satin number.

Get your eyebrows shaped as no oversize sunglasses to hide the Amazon above your eyes. Harvest the chest and smoothen the limps to



wear the IT item for the coming season – perfectly tailored cotton hot pants. Team it with vibrant jersey body flex tees to flaunt the skinny you. No needs of abs for coming season just work on the calf muscles.

If hot pants are hot then classic preppy pinstriped pants are mercurial. They can be dressed up with matching fitted suit with slimmer tie. Perfect the look with enamel brooch or colourful tie pin. Make sure the pants have pleats like your dad and if not stripes try teal blue, grey or anything in the high tone colour scheme.

The all American cardigan and skinny pants will make another round but in fresh colours and abstract prints. Orange will be the next big thing as per colours are concerned. From burnt to flaming, almost fluorescent, signature Hermes to ripped peach. One thing is for sure which ever tint, tone or shade you wear, you are about to get more juicy for sure.

Don't be angry if someone calls you Pajama *chhaap*, it's in ways a compliment for being a fashion innovator. Nothing better then being cool in wearing those drainpipes loose drawstring pants teamed up with classy tee. Try tucking in a crisp white shirt with skinny tie and float in classy sandals to look a beachy executive.

The accessories got a classy twister as the scarves got a better hold this season on the macho neck. Tie a knot or wear it loose. Go for long knitted ones, the summer mufflers are one magnetic buy for next summer, or start the trend now. The skinny the waist goes, skinnier the clincher goes. Try slim belts in white or silver and make them your daily does of haute-ness. Tucked in or just to define your workout schedule. Use it as your weapon to thrill and to anchor those loose pants on your next summer cruise.

The ultimate statement is the XXL Bag. Buy, steal, fight or kill your fiancé, wife or gal pals to get the best large bags. Its giant size we talking about. Bigger the better you thought now its time for action. Compete and conquer the battle by buy purchasing the leather doctors bag in sparkling patent in block hues or play safe with beige, silver or brown. Bottega revisited the classic bags well as Gucci got hipper with fluorescent strap, almost pop art-esque.

Pedicure is must to do or to try activity, as we no more hunt with those pointy toe nails. Instead pick up pointy leather boots with vibrant appliqué and hand painted floral motifs. Even, the Rin supreme white classic shoes are going to come back from fashion cemetery. If not then just add a fluorescent lace in your old pair of oxfords. If daring enough then choose patent shoes in sorbet colors like strawberry, sunset orange, lime green.

If devil wears Prada then be God in Gucci in the coming summer!!!!

The alarm is set for battle of the sexes.



The Boyfriend

Author- R. Raja Rao

Arijit Chandra

One fine Sunday morning, Yudi (an 'Americanized' version of Yudhishtir) meets a boy Milind who is half his age while looking for a 'bite' around a public loo at a local train station. And from that day onwards Yudi's life takes a rollercoaster ride of comic-tragic events.

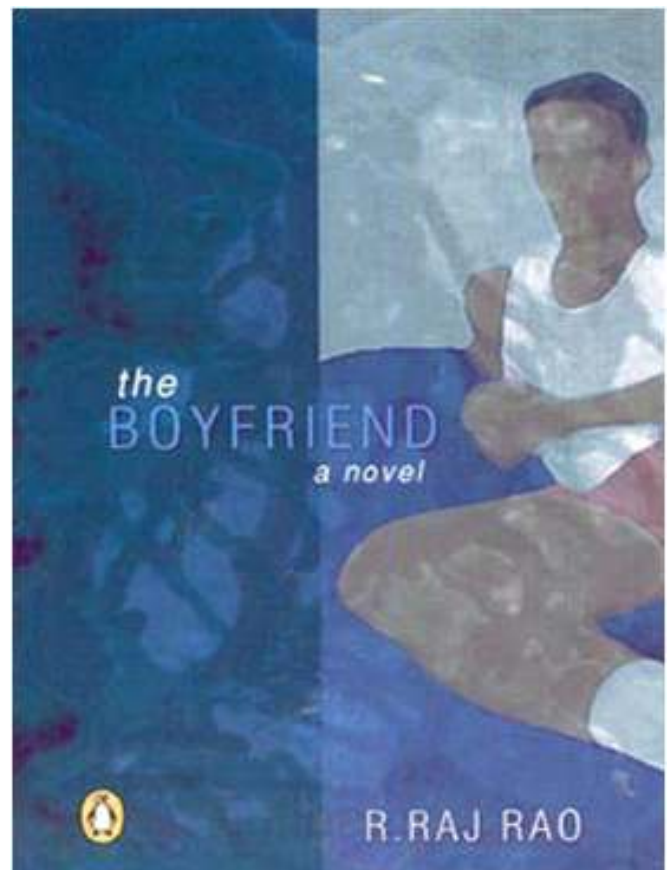
The Boyfriend, is a novel by famous Indian LGBT writer, poet and activist R. Raj Rao, who in fact not an unfamiliar name among Indian subcontinent literary circles. He came up with his first novel and first gay novel of India. Already causing a stirring in the Indian media with his collection of poems narrating the short film BomGay in year 1999, this novel published in 2003 by Penguin India was acclaimed as one of year's finest books.

The setting of the novel is the heart of Mumbai (then Bombay). The events that take place in the story happen ten years before the book was published. The omnipresent 'invisible' gay culture in Mumbai - whether it is the lookout of the public loo, or the weekend hangout in Testosterone - the only gay bar in the city; or greasing the palms of police; or the kissing in the Irani restaurant - this book somehow familiarizes the readers to the 'closets' and gays. The story can be treated as a love story with a happy tryst of two lovers to heart-wrenching parting with a pragmatically sentimental ending. However, the writer has managed to avoid every kind of hanky-panky and come up with a dry, satirical humor that makes this novel a fun read. Also the writer's attempts to sketch the contemporary issues of Indian culture like caste, class, poverty, illiteracy, slums etc. in witty, irreverent humor are worthy of praise. R. Raj Rao compares untouchability with homosexuality, when one of his protagonists Yudi (who is Brahmin by caste) says to dalit boy Milind "Homos are no different from Bhangis. Both are Untouchables. I am a homosexual. Gay by caste. Gay by religion." "Outcastes" he says, "can only expect to be friends with outcastes."

The storyline goes like this. Yudi or Yudhishtir who is in his 40s is a freelance journalist, lives in the suburbs of Nalla Sopara,

Mumbai. He is gay who is used to picking up boys from public toilets or some parks or from local trains. One day he meets a 19 year old dalit boy Milind Mahadik. Some days after this meeting, Mumbai burns with the infamous communal riots of the year 1993. Though Yudi never felt sentiments about his previous 'guys', he worries about the safety of Milind. He even goes on a lookout for Milind but his efforts remain futile until one day, after some months, he meets him, working as a peon. After this more trysts take place and they get 'married'. Meanwhile a neurotic woman named Gauri comes in the life of Yudi who falls in love with him and tries to 'straighten' him. Already 'woman-phobic', Yudi does everything to avoid her advances. Months later Milind again disappears and this makes Yudi's life miserable. Milind appears again and then he gets married, knowing this Yudi, becomes all the more obsessive and longs for Milind. Through these hard times Gauri helps him to reduce his misery by becoming his friend with a sisterly affection.

The ending is quite pragmatic but surprising. The story may not strike a chord, still it leaves an indelible effect on the reader. All in all, it is fun and easy to read. And with this book the author has been successful to be in the league of the evolving genre of both Indian English



A Married Woman

Author – Manju Kapur

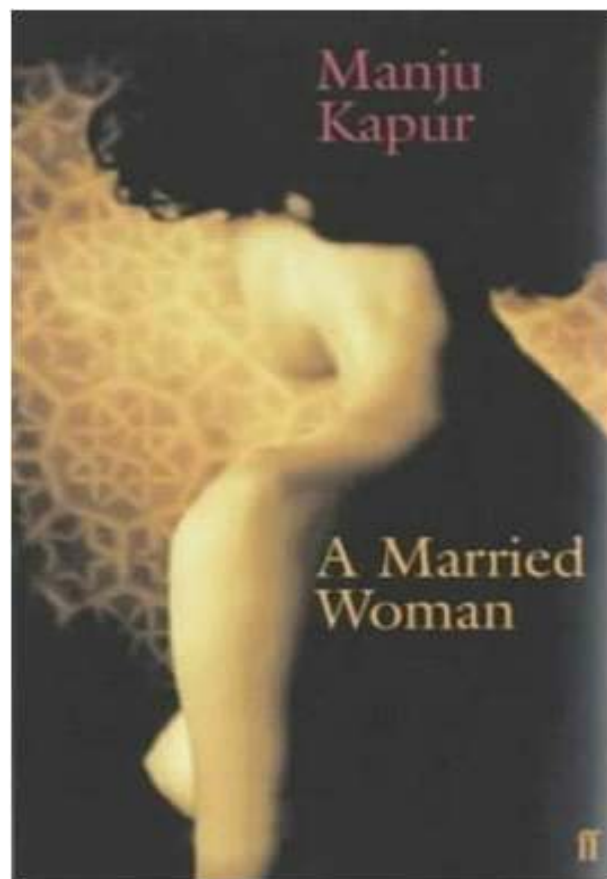
Mallika Sarabhai

Astha is the urban middle class everywoman. Pretty, parents in the government in Delhi, dreams of love and romance and a family, parents dreams of a house of their own, the occasional heart flutter during college. Then marriage. He seems nicer than most, more attentive, more considerate. Then babies and in laws. Then the boredom - at being only baby sitter and sex partner, at the beck and call of a mother in law. Astha is encouraged to take on a teaching job to "time pass" but gets deeply involved in it, running the school paper, mentoring young girls. Till theater activist Aijaaz lights a candle in her heart, one that leads to an active engagement with the Babri Masjid issue. The docile wife's mind awakens and a feminist is about to be born, one who wants to make a difference, one who wants to stand up to be counted. Aijaaz's sudden murder by a band of Hindutva hooligans, the entire theater group charred in their van as they try to perform for peace shatters Astha. Over time her marriage crumbles and she gets close to Aijaaz's unconventional wife Pippee. Love blossoms again, or is it comfort ? The two women find themselves in a soul warming relationship where, after the initial reluctances Astha finds herself obsessively involved. Her career as a painter blossoms with the love, driving a further wedge with her husband and family. The inevitable choice arises - to live with her true love Pippee or to continue the subterfuge of being in a marriage. She chooses the latter, unable to give up her children or to bring them into an unconventional lesbian relationship.

Few novels in India have taken the through route with bisexuality. More have hinted at the yearning. In reality, how many women, if all taboos were excised, like a relatively unpressured relationship with another woman? How many even know of the possibility? Is the lure in the understanding that a woman provides another woman, the comfort, the need to talk, to hug rather than always have sex etc? The kind that one saw in *Fire*? Or is it genetically programmed?

Manju Kapur tells an averagely interesting tale but does well to bring the topic out in the open for a general public. I would be interested

to hear the reactions at the kitty parties where the book might be discussed.



Maurice

Author – E M Forster

Kishore Kumar

In the beginning there was *Maurice*. Before *Brokeback*, before *Tales of the City* and before *Stonewall*. When most of the western world could only speak of homosexuality in hushed tones, Edward Morgan Forster, author of *A Passage to India*, sat down to write *Maurice* in 1913, though he did not allow its publication in his lifetime.

Maurice is a story of love, bravery and rebellion, woven intricately in a time when England was very harsh to "acts of gross indecency" between adult men. It is the story of a young man and his sexual and emotional awakening, experienced through his love for Clive, his Cambridge friend, and later Alec, the gamekeeper on Clive's estate. The novel is, besides, a condemnation of a pretentious and repressive British society.

The novel begins with 14-year old Maurice Hall having a talk with his prep-school teacher, who deems it his duty to tell the young lad about marriage and sex. However, at the end of the discussion, Maurice feels cheated and thinks, "Liar, coward, he's told me nothing." He does not see himself adopting his teacher's description of an adult life with marriage with a woman at its centre.

Maurice grows up to be a curious, insightful and brave young man. 'To ascend, to stretch a hand up to the mountainside until a hand catches it, was the end for which he had been born.' When he goes to college, he soon makes friends with fellow student Clive Durham, with whom he enters into a committed and deeply loving relationship, however chaste and non-consummate. Though it is clear that Maurice looks forward to more than a platonic relationship, it is also clear that Clive's predisposition to falling into well established social roles will never make it possible.

Disappointed and hurt by Clive's rejection, Maurice seeks psychiatric help with a certain Dr Barry, who cannot even comprehend Maurice's situation. This scene exposes the emotional limitations and helplessness of society, especially in matters relating to homosexuality. Later, a hypnotist labels Maurice's condition as "congenital homosexuality" and claims to be able to cure 50% of his patients suffering from it. After Maurice's first appointment with him, however, he realises that the endeavour was in vain. The hypnotist doubts if England will ever accept homosexuality, saying "England has always been disinclined to accept human nature."

Maurice then meets Alec Scudder, the gamekeeper at Penge, Clive's estate. The physical intimacy that Clive denied is what brings Maurice and Alec together. After their first night together, Maurice is sceptical of his position and tries to keep Alec at arm's length. As a result, Alec writes a letter of blackmail to Maurice, threatening to expose his homosexuality.

Alec and Maurice later meet at the British Museum, and in a moving scene, realise that they are both in love with each other. Alec however had already decided to go away to Argentina to start a new life away from Penge. Though resentful of this fact, Maurice decides

to go to give him a send-off, but doesn't find Alec on the ship. Panicking, he goes back to the boathouse at Penge where the two lovers were supposed to meet, and finds Alec there. Alec intends to stay with Maurice, telling him that they "shan't be parted no more."

Before the close of the novel, Maurice visits Clive one last time and tells him of his plans for his future with Alec, and then disappears into the woods to join him. The novel ends with a confused Clive, unable to understand, trying to devise a lie to tell his wife Anne.

Maurice is a novel written when it was still possible to live away from civilisation, in the "greenwood." And Maurice and Alec rebelled against society only to the extent that they abandoned it. A contrast can be drawn between what Maurice wanted, and what the LGBT movements today envisage. We don't ask for freedom to run away and live in the greenwood today; we ask for social acceptance and equality. We dream of a world where sexuality does not matter, where stories would be told about gay love without reference to homophobia or social and familial acceptance – and these stories would be true.



LGBT Literature: Why Bother?

Kishore Kumar

In *The Symposium*, Plato discussed love as motivating the search for the forms, as a philosophical and spiritual exercise. This book is considered one of the foundations of western civilisation. More than two thousand years after Plato, Walt Whitman wrote his *Leaves of Grass*, which was hailed as the definitive work of early American poetry. When his employer read the book, he sacked Whitman for being “the author of an obscene book” because it had some explicitly homosexual content.

Homosexuals have existed in all societies at all points in history. And almost every literate society has had homosexual literature, or what is now called LGBT writing, in its repertoire – whether published openly in its books and magazines, or passed secretly from hand to hand, or “hidden in a hundred desk drawers.” It has even been said that many or most of the authors who have recreated modern writing were gay, or Irish, or Jewish - Melville, Whitman, Hopkins, James, Yeats, Kafka, Woolf, Joyce, Stein, Beckett, Mann, Proust, Gide, Firbank, Lorca, Cocteau, Auden, Forster, Cavafy. And if we looked carefully, we can find enough traces or even direct evidence in the works of Shakespeare and Marlowe and Bacon, to declare them too part of the gay tradition. A thin but clear line that runs through western literature.

The gamut of gay literature ranges from the portrayal of dark protagonists who elude comprehension and inspire fear and confusion, to the beautiful sonnets of Shakespeare and poetry of Whitman. In fact, most of the LGBT literature of the past is contained in stories and novels with a deep homosexual undercurrent that can be dissected out on careful study. For example, Ruth Tiefenbrun writes of Kafka,

It is only when one reads the totality of Kafka's writings that it becomes apparent that the predicament of all

his heroes is based on the fact that they are all homosexuals. . . . Since Kafka spent his entire lifetime deliberately concealing his homosexuality, it is not at all surprising that there are relatively few overt references to homosexuality in his personal letters, diaries, notebooks, or in his creative works . . . Kafka shares with his fellow deviants their most distinctive trait: their simultaneous need to conceal themselves and to exhibit themselves.

Today's gay literature contains explicitly gay content, but it is important to understand that it took an awful lot of time and a plethora of social changes to bring about this shift. Bayard Taylor's *Joseph and his friend: a story of Pennsylvania* (1870) is widely considered America's first gay novel, while E M Forster's *Maurice* (1914) was England's first.

But why does any of this matter? Why is the identification and study of LGBT literature important? Because gay literature mirrors gay history and, more or less faithfully, records gay life in its time in its social context. Because as gay readers and writers become more visible and confident, and gay politics more settled and serious, gay history becomes a vital element in gay identity.

In dealing with homosexuality, we need to understand the relationship of the homosexual to society at large, and the reciprocal



E. M. Forster

relationship. This assumes paramount importance because being gay comes with a lot of social baggage. Any treatment of the gay woman or man that does not consider this would be incomplete. Since LGBT literature, as does literature of any genre for that matter, reflects upon the mores of a society at a given time, studying it would give us insights into the various social constructs that the homosexual has had to live through, through the ages. This in turn would give us a clear knowledge of the evolution of gay culture and lifestyle, and gay identity.

Within literature too, there are several questions that we are tempted to ask. Why didn't Thomas Mann come out? Why didn't Forster publish *Maurice* in 1914, when he



Franz Kafka

wrote it? Why didn't the American critic F.O. Matthiessen write a history of gay American writing? How come critics didn't realise that Forster was gay? And why are gay lives presented as tragic in so much writing? Why can't gay writers give gay men happy endings, as Jane Austen gave heterosexuals? Why is gay life often presented as darkly sensational? These, and other questions, both in literature and in history, merit a careful consideration, though real answers may not be in sight.

Just as the social conditions of an age shape its literature, literature has an inverse relationship to society. It can be a catalyst in bringing about social change and can play an active part in deciding what a community deems acceptable and what, deplorable. In other words, alongside mass media, it enjoys the privilege of generating public opinion.

On a more personal scale, gay fiction, especially gay teen fiction as we call it today, plays a role in the development of a healthy perception of self and sexuality, and of a strong gay identity. Exposure to such fiction helps adolescents overcome feelings of shame and guilt which can otherwise lead to serious psychiatric problems often culminating in self denial and even suicide. However, it is unfortunate that such works of literature are simply not available in India, owing to whatever reasons, leaving these feelings of shame to fester and adversely affecting the quality of lives of millions of gay people in the country.

All this aside, studying gay literature has a much greater personal importance. All other communities who were oppressed in their history – Jewish people, say, or African Americans – have every opportunity to work out the implications of their oppression in their early lives. They hear the stories; they have the books around them. Gay people, on the other hand, grow up alone; there is no history. There are no ballads about the wrongs of the past, the martyrs are all forgotten. Thus the discovery of a history and a heritage has to be made by each individual as part of the road to freedom, or at least knowledge.

This would be the goal of these columns – to bring to the fore stories from literature, discussing great men and women who wrote of homosexuality, openly or behind a veil, from different countries and in various languages. And these columns will be written for a varied audience, straight and gay – for those comfortable, or struggling, with the reality of sexual diversity in a country that is just waking up to it.

Milk

Karan Sood

***I** know that you can't live on hope alone, but without it, life is not worth living. And you, and you, and you, and you have got to give them hope."* quoted Harvey Milk, giving his "Hope Speech" at the 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day.

Based on the tagline: His life changed history. His courage changed lives; Milk is an American biographical film on the life of gay rights activist and politician Harvey Milk, who was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in the United States of America as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Made brilliantly under the direction of Gus Van Sant and written by Dustin Lance Black, the film stars Sean Penn as Milk. It is a movie worth watching gripping every scene with humor, desires, hope, love and political provocation.

The film use flashbacks from a statement recorded late in life and archival footage for atmosphere, tracing Harvey Milk's career from his 40th birthday to his death. He leaves the closet, opens a camera shop that becomes the salon for San Francisco's growing gay community, and organizes gays' purchasing power to build political alliances. He runs for office with lover Scott Smith as his campaign manager. Victory finally comes on the same day Dan White wins in the city's conservative district. The film flows so gracefully, making it

historically precise, moving as a good fiction film.

Though it's unflinching in its depiction of homosexual affection, the marvel of the movie is the dexterity with which it excels the specificity of its characters and gay theme to be a universal human statement and profound political epic. Though it couldn't make for the Best motion picture of the year, Van Gust well established his personal life on the political ground, making it a flawless movie. Even Screenwriter Dustin Lance Black pulls off something very close to magic, leading Milk to the Oscar for Best Writing and Screenplay 2008

Penn goes deep and soulful in a highly ingratiating performance that's the one to beat for the Best Actor Oscar. Penn inimitably brought Milk alive as a vital and highly relevant figure, not just a political abstraction or any gay activist. Josh Brolin, being nominated for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role (Oscar), lived his character wonderfully. Even James Franco and Emile Hirsch have done an excellent job in the film.

Milk received widespread acclaim from film critics. Rotten Tomatoes reported that 93% of critics gave the film a positive review, based on a sample of 209, with an average score of 8.0/10. Winning two Oscars, for the categories Best actor and best screenplay, it was nominated for six other. In addition, it won another 33 awards and was nominated for around 44 categories.



I can't Think Straight

Priya Ganoo

Even as you see the promos of 'I can't think straight', you know you'll have to watch this movie come what may. Personally for me, after seeing the film it has been difficult to keep myself from watching it over and over again.

The movie is based on the novel of the same name penned by Director Shamim Sarif herself. The story revolves around Tala (Lisa 'hot' Ray) and Leyla (an irresistibly amazing Sheetal Seth). As her parents make grand wedding preparations for Tala's wedding in Jordan, she encounters a clumsy, demure, sensitive Leyla who secretly works to become a writer in London. But Leyla is dating Tala's best friend Ali. However as sparks fly and love blossoms between the two, Tala realizes her own sense of duty and amidst much heartbreak flies back to Jordan leaving Leyla shattered.

As the wedding draws closer Tala is forced to rethink her wedding to Hani and eventually breaks the wedding.

This is not the end of the story though. Tala must cross and break all barriers to be with Leyla who on the other hand comes out to her parents and boyfriend.

The cinematography is brilliant and captures the aesthetic appeal of London and Jordan perfectly. The background score is not too loud and yet just fits in well with the setting of the film. Lisa Ray plays her part with ease and Sheetal Seth undoubtedly can make you fall in love with a not-so-perfect Leyla. The chemistry between these two is the highlight of the film.

All in all, the film is a must watch for all those who like films that are feel-good with a nice story, good cast and eye-candy.



Before night Falls

Arijit Chandra

" My name for the moment is Reinaldo Arenas. I am an exiled Cuban writer. I live in New York City. I write and I survive. I am not religious, I am homosexual and at the same time anti-Castro. I meet all the conditions of never publishing a single novel. "

-- Reinaldo Arenas

Based on the memoir published posthumously, *Before Night Falls* is a biographical film of Cuban poet and writer Reinaldo Arenas. However the screenplay is based on several of Arenas' other works like *Singing From the Well* and *The Hallucinations*.

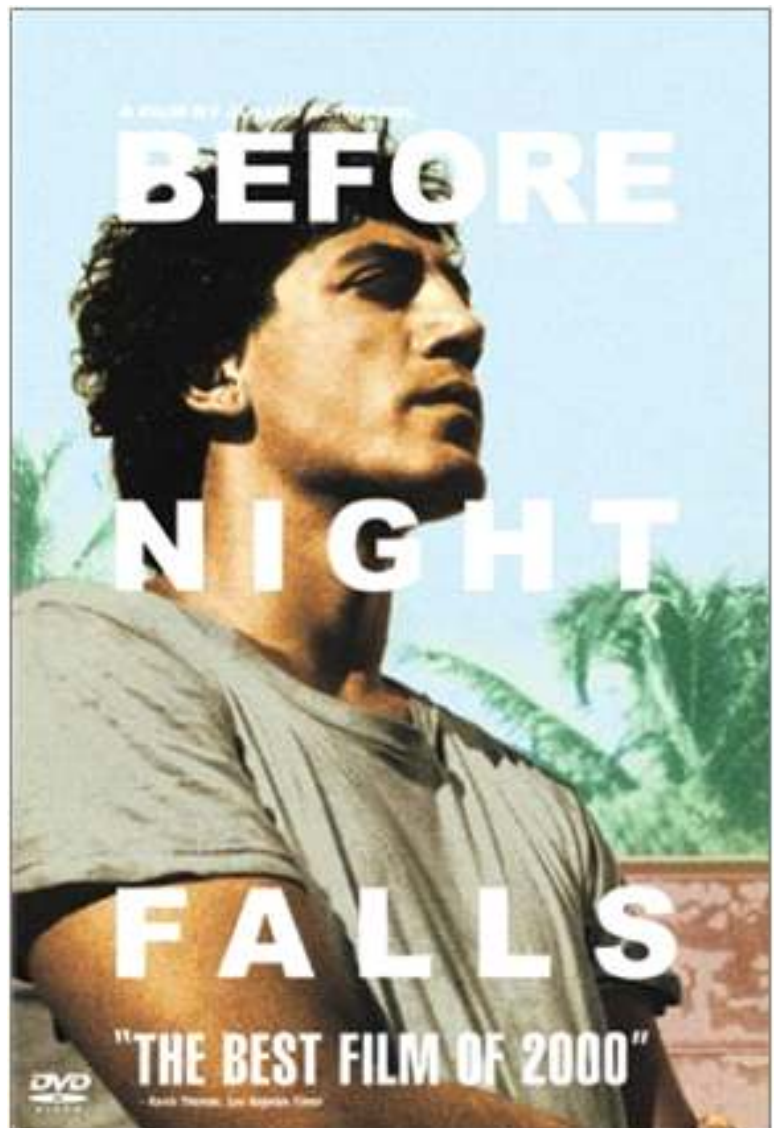
In an episodic way of narrated events, this film shows the pheasant childhood and impoverished youth of the poet, an ardent celebrant of the revolution ("Long Live Fidel! Viva Fidel!"), and later conflict with the Castro regime due to his writing and homosexuality, subsequent imprisonment and exile to New York City in 1980, followed by Arenas' struggle with AIDS and eventual suicide (aged forty seven) in 1990.

Directed by artist-director Julian Schnabel who is the master of portraying biographies of artists on the silver screen, this second film of his is nonetheless an example of his excellence like his other works. His cinema is like poetry on silver screen. With beautiful cinematography and editing, the director has successfully presented Reinaldo's life and work in a graceful manner.

Javier Bardem who has played Reinaldo Arenas has undoubtedly done a wonderful job. He looks like he has absorbed each nuance of the poet's life, and in the same way he has executed his skills, and thus this Spanish actor went on to receive a

nomination for an Academy Award for best actor. Among other supporting casts, cameo of Johnny Depp (in dual roles) as drag queen Bon-Bon who helps Arenas to smuggle his writings out of prison and Lieutenant Victor overseeing the prison, have been quite a showcase of Depp's versatile acting. Olivier Martinez who played as Lazaro has also been effective in his short role.

With the slight feel of a documentary (and indeed, showing some archival footages), this film is sometimes unpleasant because of its stark realism. Nevertheless, it is a thought-provoking, poignant drama and yet a beautiful example of real cinema. Overall it is a worth watch.



Mahesh Dattani

Niladri Chatterjee

Except for Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi play *Mitra's Story* (1982), which is regarded as the first Indian play with a lesbian protagonist, there was not much queer presence on the Indian stage until Mahesh Dattani's English-language play *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991). Since then Dattani has written eight screenplays and twelve other plays; one of these screenplays and four of the plays feature at least one gay character. His recurrent depictions of homosexual characters make him an important figure in South Asian gay culture.

Dattani was born on August 7, 1958 in Bangalore, where his parents settled, although they are from Gujarat and have also lived in Mumbai. His education was at a Christian institution, Baldwin's High School, where the language of instruction was English. He graduated in History, Economics, and Political Science and has a postgraduate degree in Marketing and Advertising Management.

While growing up Dattani learned the classical south-Indian dance of Bharatnatyam, which subsequently helped him to develop skills in managing space on stage. It was not until he finished school and watched some Gujarati and Kannada theater that he identified his calling. However, at the time he was a copywriter at an advertising agency.

For a brief period he worked in his father's business before forming his theater group, Playpen, in 1984. Initially they performed Greek tragedy and modern classics, under Dattani's direction. He often acted in his own productions.

Dattani's entire opus may be seen as a

relentless assault on Indian patriarchy. He struck his first blow by empowering women characters in his debut play *Where There's a Will* (1988). In a line rich with queer suggestion, a mistress says of her benefactor, "He saw in me a woman who would father him." In his next play, tellingly titled *Dance Like a Man* (1989)--turned into a film of the same name in 2003, directed by Pamela Rooks--queer presence is signaled when a male Bharatnatyam dancer's father hints at a dance instructor's non-normative sexuality by commenting on the latter's long hair and style of walking.

Gender also holds center stage in his next play *Tara* (1990) before yielding some discreet but significant space to sexuality in *Bravely Fought the Queen*. This play, about two brothers trying to run an advertising agency, is the first example of a male character vocalizing, if not



A still from *Mango Soufflé*

performing, his homosexuality on the Indian stage.

In the play, Nitin Trivedi is apparently happily married to Alka, but is uncontrollably attracted to men. The first instance of his homosexual expression occurs during his narration of an incident. Nitin's brother Jatin had once knocked over a parked rickshaw because he was drunk and had lost control of his car. Nitin was with his brother when it happened. Remembering the incident Nitin relishes his own description of the rickshaw driver as "violent-looking" and remembers his "strong black arm."

Although it is not stated explicitly, the audience is given to understand that Nitin subsequently begins to enjoy the rickshaw driver's sexual services, meeting him either at the office in the absence of Jatin or at home in the absence of his wife. The play ends with a monologue by Nitin in which he says that before marriage he was



sexually involved with a young man named Praful, who had convinced Nitin to marry his sister Alka by lying to Nitin that she knew about their homosexual relationship and that she did not mind.

Gay presence in Dattani's work increases with the play *Do the Needful* (1997). Written for BBC Radio 4, the plot centers on the negotiations for an arranged marriage between Alpesh, a Gujarati man, and Lata, a Kannada (i.e., belonging to the south-Indian state of Karnataka) woman. As the play progresses it is revealed that the woman is not agreeable to the marriage because she loves Salim, a Muslim man, while the prospective groom is in love with a man named Trilok. Although she tells Alpesh about her love for another man, Alpesh keeps quiet about his homosexual relationship.

Alpesh's homosexuality is revealed to Lata when she surprises him and the gardener of her family having sex in the cowshed, just as she is about to run away to Salim. At first horrified, she subsequently decides that the best way to deal with the situation is to marry Alpesh, so that they can lead separate sexual lives yet keep up the appearance of a happy couple: a common compromise in a society that has criminalized non-procreative sex since 1862!

On a Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998)--subsequently turned into the film *Mango Soufflé* (2002), which Dattani directed from his own screenplay--places homosexuality at its centre. It is not inaccurate to suggest that all of Dattani's previous work leads up to this play: from concerns with gender, to a hint of homosexuality, to its partial presence, to a complete engagement with it. Of the eight characters in this play, five are gay men and one is a lesbian.

The plot hinges on Kamlesh's trying to hide from his sister Kiran the fact that he was in a relationship with the man she is about to marry. The play samples a wide range of male homosexual presence in Indian society. Kamlesh is a well-adjusted, straight-acting gay man. His ex-boyfriend Sharad is intelligent and campy. Ed is in denial and is about to enter into a heterosexual marriage after having an affair with his fiancée's brother, Kamlesh. Bunny is a celebrity and in the closet.

Whether or not *Night Queen* (1999), published in *Yaraana--an anthology of Indian gay writing*--was written before or after *Muggy Night*, it covers almost the same area as the previous play. But *Night Queen* is a one-act play and has only two characters: Raghu and Ash, two young men who pick each other up in a park and come to Raghu's home for sex. Ash is to be engaged to Raghu's sister Gayatri the following day and is not aware that Raghu has already recognized him as Gayatri's soon-to-be fiancé.

In another play written for BBC, *Seven Steps around the Fire* (1999), Dattani focuses on the plight of the *hijra* (or transsexual) community by fashioning a plot that involves the killing of a *hijra* because she was having a relationship with a government minister's son. Representing the *hijra* community on stage further adds to the spectrum of queer characters created by Dattani and underlines his abiding interest in non-normative, marginalized sexualities.

In 1998 Dattani became the first playwright in English to be awarded India's most prestigious literary prize, the Sahitya Akademi Award. Bestowed on him for a collection of his plays, *Final Solutions and Other Plays*, the citation described his work as "a brilliant contribution to Indian drama in English."

Dattani has repeatedly used what may be called the split-stage technique, which involves dividing the stage into two halves or two levels, one beside or above the other. Then he gives lines to characters in the two spaces in such a way that there is constant intercutting between the two actions. This not only makes for a tighter narrative but also a richer visual effect.

The technique can also be interpreted as Dattani's way of signaling that in India, as elsewhere in the world, multiple realities co-exist, resolutely and cheek-by-jowl, but that often only one reality--the heteronormative and patriarchal--is visible. Dattani's plays are a sustained effort at highlighting the otherwise invisible by situating it where it belongs--alongside the visible normative reality.

(*glbtq arts*)

Queer AS Folk

Niket

There is a old Northern England saying "there's nowt as queer as folk" aka "there's nothing as strange as people". This was the inspiration for *Queer as Folk* a 1999 British television series that chronicles the lives of three gay men living in Manchester's gay village around Canal Street. More popularly known by the American remake of the British series, *Queer As Folk 2* or simply *Queer As Folk* the American version follows the lives of a group of gay men and women living in Pittsburgh who, like anyone, are focused on their relationships, careers, loves and ambitions. The series is a realistic, funny and sometimes graphic portrayal of a minority community living in present-day society.

The show is about a gaggle of gay pals - an exec Brian (Gale Harold), an out, amoral, cheeky slut who's the adored leader of this social circle; Michael (Hal Sparks), a meek, half in the closet gay man and out of the closet comic book geek; Emmett (Peter Paige), a flamboyant chatterbox ; Ted Smith (Scott Lowell) once wallflower accountant takes a turn for the worse and ends up seeing the dark side of a drug-laced misadventure. Having woken up to see his life and love destroyed, Ted takes it one day at a time. Fighting for his health and struggling to rebuild former bonds. Justin (Randy Harrison), a 17 year old who's just discovering his sexuality, courtesy of the 29 year old Brian. Debbie (Sharon Gless) Michael's mother colourful and exuberant with her kitsch-covered flare, She is fiercely protective of her son , enamoured at becoming a Grandmother to baby Jenny and totally in love with Detective Horvath. Her boundless loyalty and motherly instincts also extend to a family of friends. Lindsay (Thea Gill) gorgeous blonde is a wife, a mother, and a loyal friend to many. Lindsay is a determined woman who is often the quiet force. She's up to all challenges and reveling in the glory while healing the rifts between old friends. and

Melanie (Micelle Clunie), Tough, brassy and sexy, this no-nonsense wife to Lindsay, mother of Gus and new mother to Jenny has taken her ambitions to a new level. Though strenuous and trying at times, she lives up to each challenge and shows all that this woman is made. Another main character, Ben (Robert Gant) was added in the second season Ben is HIV-positive, dedicated lover to Michael and father to Hunter has built the kind of life he's always wanted. With his brain matching his brawn, this gentle Buddhist won't let his life, love and happiness stay in turmoil for long. Nobody's going to take away his American dream. Then there is Vic Grassi (Jack Wetherall) Michael's uncle who lives with Debbie and is HIV Positive too. He recovered from a lengthy stay in the hospital prior to the beginning of the series and took a trip to Italy with Debbie, not knowing that he would live to see the bills from this trip start showing up. James Montgomery aka Hunter Bruckner-Novotny (Harris Allan) a former Hustler who was adopted by Michael and Ben as their son. Hunter is HIV Positive due to his past as a street hustler who's having a hard time adjusting to being positive & having a family.

The series revolves around Babylon, a gay dance club jam-packed with Abercrombie & Fitch models seven nights a week, and visitors are quickly lost in a sea of techno wizardry and glistening, half-clothed bodies. Most amazing is the club's backroom, where the crème de la crème of the club's pretty boys disrobe and screw one another until they can barely stand. This is hardly like most clubs, gay or straight, but Babylon is what this show is all about: glitz, chaos, good looks, and jealousy on the dance floor and Liberty Avenue which is city's gay village. With its many Pubs Night Clubs & Dinners all catering to the city's gay crowd.

The first episode finds the four friends at Babylon at 1.00 am with Michael narrating "The thing you need to know is it's all about sex....". Brian picks up and has sex with Justin, who falls in love with him and eventually becomes more than a one-night-stand. Brian also becomes a father that night, bearing a son with Lindsay through artificial insemination.

Michael's seemingly unrequited love for Brian fuels the story, which he occasionally narrates in voice-over. Justin's coming out and budding relationship with Brian has unexpected effects on Brian and Michael's lives. Justin confides in his straight high-school friend Daphne, while struggling to deal with homophobic classmates and his dismayed, divorcing parents, Craig and Jennifer. Later in the second season Justin and Michael co-create the sexually explicit underground comic "Rage", featuring a "Gay Crusader" superhero based on Brian.

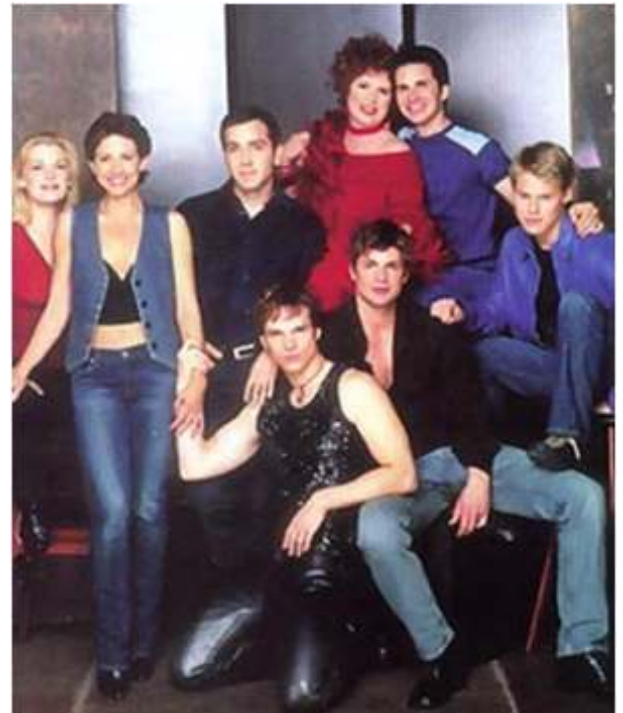
Brian's son Gus, being raised by Lindsay and Melanie, becomes the focus of several episodes as issues of parental rights come to the fore. Ted is Melanie's accountant who once harboured a longstanding crush on Michael. He and Emmett begin as best friends, but briefly become lovers later in the series. Their relationship ends as Ted, unemployed and with a criminal record earned from running a legitimate porn website that was targeted by a Chief of Police running for Mayor, becomes addicted to crystal meth. In the fourth season, Brian, who has lost his job by assisting Justin in opposing an anti-gay political client, starts his own agency. Michael marries Ben Bruckner, an HIV-positive college professor and the couple adopts a teenage son, James "Hunter" Montgomery, who is also HIV-positive as a result of his experiences as a young hustler.

Ted's affair with a handsome crystal meth addict, Blake Wyzecki, sets the pattern for Ted's later tragic but ultimately redeeming experiences with drug addiction.

Melanie and Lindsay's relationship, while on the surface seeming more of a "stable" relationship, is actually quite tumultuous and controversial. Each cheats on the other at various points in the series; both tackle on a threesome shortly after they marry and become separated for much of the 4th and 5th seasons. Melanie is impregnated by Michael (through artificial insemination, as Lindsay was) in the third season, so that best friends Brian and Michael become co-fathers to Lindsay and Melanie's children. Melanie gives birth to a girl, Jenny Rebecca, over whom Melanie, Lindsay, and Michael have a brief legal custody battle following the women's

transitory break-up. Brian's new advertising agency, Kinnetik, becomes highly successful both through a combination of Brian's customer loyalty and his edgier advertising. As a result of this, Brian is able to purchase Club Babylon from its bankrupt owner.

In the fifth and final season the boys have



become men, and the series, perhaps more comfortable in its role in gay entertainment, tackles political issues head-on and with much more fervour.

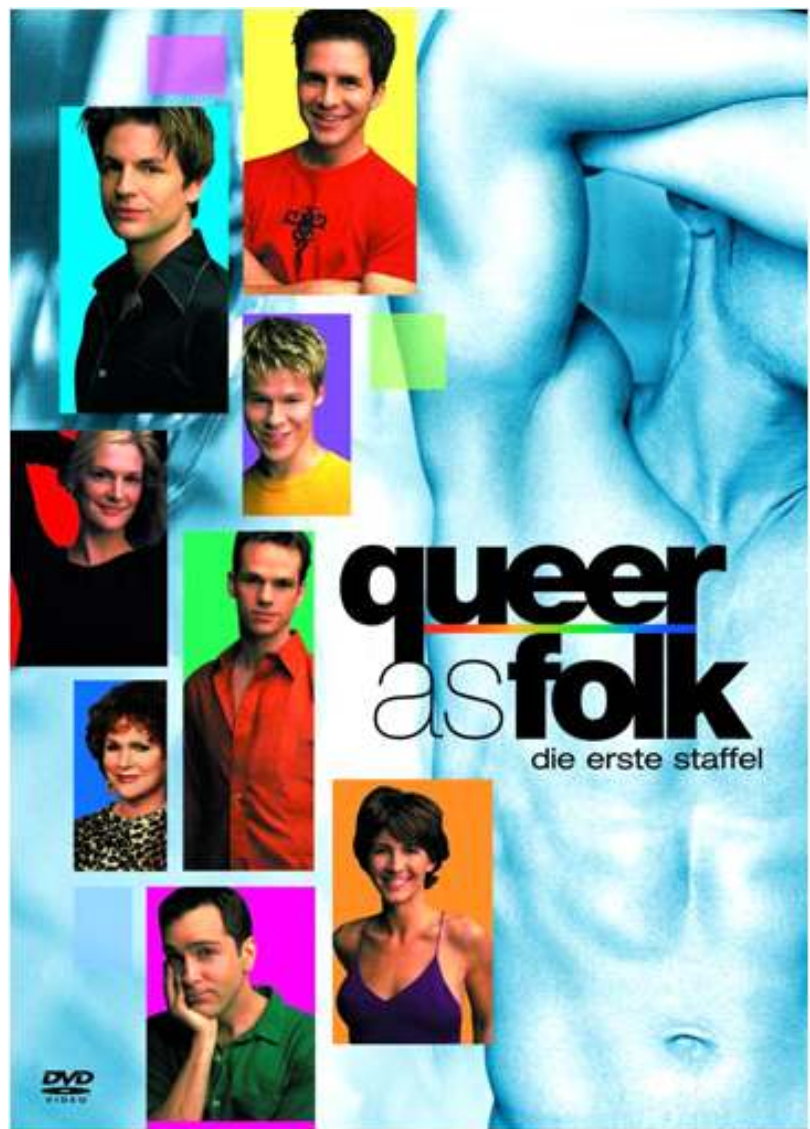
A political campaign called "Proposition 14" is depicted during much of the final season as a looming threat to the main characters. This proposition, like so many real-life recent legislative moves that have affected many U.S. states, threatens to outlaw same-sex marriage, adoption and other family civil rights. The many ways in which such a proposition would affect the characters are depicted through nearly every episode. Debbie, Justin, Jennifer, Daphne, Emmett, Ted, Michael, Ben, Lindsay, Melanie and the children are depicted standing up and fighting against this proposition both by active canvassing, political contributions and other democratic processes, but are met with staunch opposition, discrimination, outright hatred and political setbacks.

The show climaxes near the end of the series when a benefit to support opposition to Proposition 14 hosted at Brian's club Babylon (after repeated relocations of the benefit, due to discrimination) is attacked by a bomb that initially kills 4, and eventually another 3 and injures 67.

This horrible event sets the bittersweet tone for the final three episodes, in which Brian, frightened by this third possible loss of Justin, finally declares his love for him. The two even plan to marry, but Justin's artistic abilities get noticed by a New York art critic and the two decide, for the time being at least, in favor of a more realistic approach to a stormy relationship that nevertheless works for their characters. Melanie and Lindsay, realizing they have more in common than they don't, resume their relationship but relocate to Canada to "raise (their children) in an environment where they will not be called names, singled out for discrimination, or ever have to fear for their life."

Emmett becomes a Queer-Eye type TV presenter but is later fired when professional football player Drew Boyd kisses him on the news. Ted confronts his midlife crisis head-on and finally reunites with Blake. Hunter returns and the Novotny-Bruckner family perseveres.

The series came full circle with the final scenes staged in the newly rebuilt Babylon nightclub. In the final scene, Brian dances to Heather Small's "Proud," a song that accompanied a pivotal scene between Brian and Michael in the very first episode of the series. It ends with a final narration by Michael: "So the "thumpa thumpa" continues. It always will. No matter what happens. No matter who's president. As our lady of Disco, the divine Miss Gloria Gaynor has always sung to us: We will survive."



Isn't it a violation of the Georgia sodomy law for the Supreme Court to have its head up its ass?
Letter to Playboy magazine, February 1987

Colouring the World Queer : Delmas Howe

Delmas Howe has described his *Stations: A Gay Passion* as both a celebration and a memorial. With titles like *The Stripping*, *The Flagellation*, and *Veronica's Kiss*, the eighteen paintings in the series clearly refer to the Christian Stations of the Cross—"but only loosely," Howe told me in one interview about the paintings. "I'm not portraying Christ or his passion. I'm portraying our own gay passion that has centered for so long now around the disaster known as AIDS."

Set in the 1970s and early 1980s on the gay sex piers of New York City's Greenwich Village, the series not only portrays the celebration by gay men of their sexuality at the height of the "gay liberation" movement, but also memorializes the many gay men lost to AIDS in the decades that have followed. In Howe's own words: "The sex piers are gone now. But the paintings are intended to evoke a conglomeration of feelings: the celebration of sexuality and the male body that the sex piers represented, the thrill of all that sex so openly available at the time, and of course the grief that has followed with AIDS."

Howe speaks from a personal knowledge of both the sex piers and AIDS. Although a native of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico—a small town located in the southern part of the state that's known mainly for its distinctive name, which it adopted in the early 1950s at the urging of a well-known television show of the era looking for a way to promote its image nationally—he lived in New York from the early 1960s until the late 1970s, when he moved back west first to Texas, then to his hometown so he could care for his aging parents. In New York, he studied at both the School of Visual Arts and the Art Students League and began his art career, but he was no stranger to the sex piers once they became a prominent part of the city's gay male life. "Those piers were the scene of some pretty

amazing goings-on," according to Howe. "It was a passionate experience for the men who participated, where we celebrated our new-found freedom after Stonewall. Unfortunately, it was a celebration that started and ended within a decade because AIDS intervened. Most of the men I knew from those days are all dead now."

It wasn't just friends who died, though. "In 1990, my partner Mackenzie Pope became very sick," Howe said. "There was a gay doctor in Truth or Consequences who had trained in the AIDS wing of a large New York hospital, and the local public health nurse was very helpful. But at the time there was no supportive network for people with AIDS in southern New Mexico, so we had a struggle caring for Mackenzie until he died in 1993."

"I was amazed at the grief I felt," Howe continued. "I didn't know how intense an emotion it is, or how it makes you so conscious of the moment. The loss of Mackenzie, the loss of so many friends." He knew he wanted to commemorate all the losses in his art, but it wasn't until a few years later that the idea for *Stations* emerged.



Study for *Veronica's kiss*

The Triumph

"I went on an extended tour of Europe," Howe explained, "a kind of pilgrimage, studying first-hand many of its art masterpieces. I visited church after church after church, and found that Christian art, when you really pay attention to it, is amazing for its homoerotic content, much of it S&M homoerotic art. The passion and crucifixion of Christ, the martyrs—all that tortured flesh, a lot of it male, just cascading down from every direction. It occurred to me that I'd come across that in my life in New York, in the S&M scene with its costumes and role-playing. Sometime after that, I was in New York again, and made another pilgrimage through the old gay haunts that are now mostly gone—the piers, the trucks, the bars of Greenwich Village. That's when it all came together. I decided to do a Gay Passion, set on the sex piers, commemorating the tens of thousands of wonderful, attractive, intelligent men wiped out because they were celebrating their sexuality. I also decided to use S&M imagery to emphasize the torture that AIDS has caused the whole gay community."

Anyone familiar with Howe's art knows that much of it embodies an erotic intensity which speaks to the heart of contemporary gay male sensibility. The male physique is not his only artistic interest, but the sexual vitality of the men he does portray—whether naked or clothed—is never in question. His Rodeo Pantheon series, for example, recasts American cowboy art in terms of an underlying homoerotic content that would have scandalized Frederic Remington. His Stations series, as already noted, points directly to the homoerotic S&M motifs



suffused through much Christian art and hagiography. And some of his most recent work, a series of cowboy angels, hints at a heaven where the main criterion for entrance, in regard to men at any rate, seems to be an impressive pectoral development and washboard stomach.

Because of this erotic slant, Howe's work has often been marginalized as "queer art" of interest mainly to gay men, and because of what might be called its figurative realism, it has sometimes been dismissed as a throwback to a kind of second-rate academic art. Figurative though it may be, however, his art is hardly academic, and much of its apparent realism is more in the eyes of the beholder than in the paintings themselves. Take a close look at the work, and live with it for a while. Howe's art has a way of entering your psyche and molding it in new ways. A close encounter with his Rodeo Pantheon—which preceded the "gay cowboy" movie *Brokeback Mountain* by well over a decade—subverts a tired genre of American painting in a way that may well permanently change the way you think about cowboys and rodeos. The subdued colors of the Stations series perfectly capture a sexuality as stripped of its romantic trappings as it was in the obsessive pursuit of sex by many gay men during the 1970s. The grays, the blacks, the leather masks and whips also foreshadow a world in which every sexual act becomes a tortured signifier of possible illness and death.

In an introductory essay to *Rodeo Pantheon*, a 1993 monograph on Howe's series published by Éditions Aubrey Walter, British photographer and art historian Edward Lucie-Smith wrote that Howe's art "belongs to a new species of polemical avant-garde art." It's not hard to see why. Like feminist art, or work by racial and ethnic minority artists, it demands that the viewer take a step back from accepted social and intellectual assumptions and view the world from a different perspective. There's nothing particularly innovative in the materials or method of Howe's art: no stuffed Angora goats with tires around their middles à la Robert Rauschenberg or dead tiger sharks floating in tanks of preservative fluid à la Damien Hirst, no revisions of photographic images via silkscreen or other media à la Andy Warhol. But given time and a viewing eye open to new ways of perceiving, his always painterly art can work its own kind of magic and color the world vibrantly queer. (*Journal of LLGAF*)

When in... Delhi!

Let's get this out of the way upfront:

Delhi is definitely not the outest and proudest metropolis in the world. When it comes to exhibiting signs of gay life, Bollywood-infused Mumbai has a coyly exposed (and gorgeously bejeweled) leg up on India's 17 million-strong capital.

Although homosexual acts are culturally taboo (your taxi driver *will* ask about "your wife" multiple times) and officially outlawed (India's Section 377 makes Proposition 8 look like a parking restriction), Delhi's ordinarily undercover LGBT community held its first gay pride parade last June and its second annual gay film festival in August. A swiftly rising middle class is pushing 21st-century Delhi forward in all the realms we love -- fashion, art, media, technology, gastronomy -- amid a sprawling cityscape that includes 10th-century Hindu temples, 16th-century Islamic palaces, early-20th-century Raj monuments, and what will soon be South Asia's largest shopping mall.

Delhi's most delicious shopping secrets, however, can still be found in the labyrinthine Chandni Chowk market in Old Delhi, where crowded stalls sell everything from hand-carved Shiva statues and deep-scented vetiver oils to gaudy silk pashminas and pungent spices. Meanwhile, in New Delhi, once-derelict Connaught Place is in the midst of renewal, with trendy shops, restaurants, and cafés cropping up in the Raj-era shopping arcades that encircle an airy new subway station. All of this is sufficient salve for any angst that may arise upon discovering there's just one gay bar in town...and it's only open on Tuesday night. Of course, you didn't travel all the way to India for another drink with the gays. Did you?

STREET GUIDE



THE GROOVE

Pegs 'n' Pints

Chanakya Lane, Chanakyapuri (behind Akbar Bhawan), New Delhi; +91-11-2687-8320

Delhi's queer chameleons get karma points for coming out of the closet on this Tuesday-only gay night (the only regular public gay venue outside the city's cruisy parks). MTV India and Bollywood showstoppers play on a loungy level overlooking the small dance floor.

THE DRINK

Olive Beach

Hotel Diplomat, 9 Sardar Patel Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi; +91-11-4604-0404
Brush shoulders with Bollywood hopefuls and foreign ambassadors (and their rakish offspring) at this whitewashed Mediterranean bar-restaurant in Delhi's diplomatic enclave. It also boasts a killer wine list (a Delhi rarity).

Rick's

The Taj Mahal Hotel, 1 Mansingh Road, New Delhi; +91-11-2302-6162

Locals and expats alike converge on this centrally located hotel bar for its posh vibe and imperiously mixed cocktails -- try the guava berry martini. Even if you're not staying at the hotel, the five-star service staff will make you feel like a distinguished guest -- before hailing you a taxi.

THE BITE**Veda**

H-27 Outer Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi; +91-11-4151-3940

Together at last: techno music and (mascarpone-stuffed) tandoori chicken! A lavishly decorated nouvelle curry house, Veda (an acronym for Very Exotic Dining Ambiance) is the brainchild (or perhaps drug-induced hallucination) of hard-partying Indian fashion designer Rohit Bal. The fried okra and yam dumplings are *mmm, mmm good*.

Karim's

Jama Masjid, Gali Kababian, Old Delhi; +91-11-2326-9880

After bazaar-hopping in Old Delhi's Chandni Chowk market, ardent materialists can unload piddling pocket change at this inexpensive roadside *dhaba* (eatery) that serves some of the most reliable Mughlai (northern Indian) cuisine in the city.

THE BED**The Imperial**

Janpath (near Connaught Place), New Delhi; +91-11-2334-1234

Live like a modern-day maharajah at this five-star 1931 landmark mixing classic Victorian, Raj-era, and Art Deco design with a museum-worthy collection of colonial art. Even the most basic rooms feature marble baths, Fragonard products, Wi-Fi, and D. Porthault linens. Don't forget to throw back a gin and tonic in the clubby 1911 Bar.

Aman New Delhi

Lodhi Road, New Delhi; +91-11-4363-3335

After building its reputation on über-luxe, off-the-path resort hideaways, Aman opened its second city hotel—this 39-room modern-Moghul palace boasting private plunge pools and terraces (at least in *some* of the suites)—in February. Built around a tranquil courtyard, it's hard to fathom the buzzing city on the other side of the walls.

THE THREADS**Delhi Cloth House**

66-B Khan Market, New Delhi; +91-11-2461-8937

India's answer to Savile Row, this sartorial sanctuary is an essential stop for demanding dandies who want bespoke tailoring at recession-proof prices (get an enviable new suit for as little as \$100). Also in Khan

Market is Ogaan, a trendy clothier stocking big-name Indian designers.

Hauz Khas Village

South Delhi; head south on Sri Aurobindo Marg

Set amid several domed Muslim tombs, the narrow medieval streets of Hauz Khas village, home to India's National Institute of Fashion Technology, teem with trendsetting shops, restaurants, and galleries. *Additional suitcase alert:* Stock up on vegetable-dyed, block-printed tunics, saris, bedspreads, and tablecloths at one of the many textile stores here. (*Out Traveler*)

It always seemed to me a bit pointless to disapprove of homosexuality. It's like disapproving of rain.

Francis Maude

the horses.

Daphne Fielding

The Duchess of Jermyn Street

Namaste!

Apphia K.

Greetings vary in each culture, region, tribe and tradition. Something that most of us have overlooked is the simple way that we were taught to greet each other.

Namaste

Namaste is not our casual 'hey, what's up?' It is not a simple, Hello, Good morning or Hi. Bonjour, Hola, Shalom are different ways of greeting people, but coming back to our roots, *Namaste* is a greeting used by so many people all over the world and not only by Indians. It is not only a salutation, but also an expression of spirituality

When saluted to another person, *Namaste* is accompanied by a slight bow, pressing hands together, and palms touching with fingers pointing upwards in front of the heart. The gesture, done by itself, without words carries with it the same meaning.

There are many versions to what the phrase *Namaste* literally means. Here's a few-

The word *nama* is split into two, *na* and *ma*. *Na* signifies negation and *ma* represents mine. The meaning is therefore "not mine." The significance of this is the implication that the individual soul belongs entirely to the Supreme soul, which is identified as residing in the individual towards whom the *namaste* is directed. There is nothing that the soul can claim as its own. *Namaste* is thus the rejection of "I" and the associated phenomena of egotism.

The action of *namaste* unfolds itself at three levels: mental, physical and verbal. It starts with a mental submission. This submission implies a total surrender of the self. By performing *namaste* before an individual we recognize the divine spark in him.

Acknowledging divine qualities in another, *namaste* makes us aware of these very characteristics residing within our own self. Simply put, *namaste* means "The God in me greets the God in you." In other words, it recognizes the equality of all, and pays honor to the sacredness of all.

Translated into a bodily act, *namaste* is rich in symbolism. The proper performance of *namaste* requires that we blend the five fingers of the left hand exactly with the fingers of the right hand. The significance behind this simple act governs the entire gamut of our active life. The five fingers of the left hand represent the five senses of karma, and those of the right hand the five organs of knowledge. Thus, it signifies that our karma or action must be in harmony, and governed by rightful knowledge, prompting us to think and act correctly.

By combining the five fingers of each hand, a total of ten is achieved. The number ten is a symbol of perfection, and the mystical number of completion and unity.

The gesture of *namaste* is unique in the sense that its physical performance is accompanied by a verbal utterance of the word "*namaste*." This practice is equivalent to the chanting of a mantra. The resonance of the sacred sound "*namaste*" is believed to have a quasi-magical value, corresponding to a creative energy change. This transformation is that of aligning oneself in harmony with the vibration of the cosmos itself, a magical mystical feat indeed!

The next time someone greets you with a smile and a *namaste*, know that they greet you with their soul. With honor and respect, return their greeting.

Till next time, in peace

Namaste



Fiction : Short Stories

I don't have anything to wear!

Arijeet

When was the last time you stood in front of your cupboard and discovered to your utter horror that you've nothing nice or suitable to wear for the evening. I guess this is perhaps the single most common horrifying incident that presents itself to us after a zit decides to magically appear on your 'glowing' face on the day you are supposed to go out on that long awaited date or an absolutely delicious cyber mate turns out to be an over 40 something balding moustached uncle dying to get into your sack!

You may have an absolutely gorgeous ensemble of top of the line shirts, tees, trousers, cargoes and jeans but then it's just never enough for that date in which you decide to tell him about your love for him. You start off by trying out one tee after another, something in sky blue or baby pink thinking to yourself that blue would make you look cool and pink would make you look cute! And then to your disbelief you discover that there's a bright red tee staring at you from the shelf which has HOT written all over it! You're left utterly confused.

Suddenly by divine intervention, it dawns upon you that sporting a casual look would probably send signals to your date that you're casual (read careless) about everything. So, you start finding the perfect formal shirt that would go with the evening. White is always in and so is black but unfortunately, you wore them before in your first two meetings and you don't want to seem repetitive with clothes. You skim through your cupboard with a frantic pace and then you suddenly realize that you're running late already!

And then you see yourself in the mirror. Oh my god! I haven't shaved. I haven't had my bath yet. Where's the CK that I bought? Where's is the goddamned sexy Jockey that he likes? Where are my lenses? Where in the world is my deo? So without wasting a single moment you decide to rush into the

shower. After a hurried shave and shower, you come out and spray copious amounts of deo on your body. You then stand in front of the mirror in probably a towel (sometimes nothing) and begin to think, oh fuck, age is showing on my love handles, and if by any chance you spot a gray hair, you're finished! But then you think, I can always have those annoying gray hairs coloured. Oh why didn't I get them coloured. Damn it! Since you are still undecided about what to wear you do a 'Eeny Meeny Miney Moe' and pick up a shirt from the cupboard, wear it and then decide 'Nah! this one is not good enough'. You fling it on the bed which already has a mountain of clothes piled up on it. Then you pick another one and then another before settling for a final one which is a wrinkle free light blue shirt with faint dark blue stripes and think to yourself, Yeah, this one looks good! I hope he likes it as well. And then wryly smile, the clothes are anyway not going to stay on long enough!

You take the tube of gel and apply it on your wet hair for that wet look. You wash your lenses and then inevitably drop them. You desperately search for them and find them in one unreachable corner of the loo. You wash them again and by the time you finish wearing them your cell phone starts howling! Uff! Who in the world is it? You rush out and see that it's your date calling.

Your date: "Where are you? I am on my way."
You (trying to cover up the delay): "Oh, I am on my way too. Will be there on time."
Your date: "Ok, see ya there."

As you finish, you realize that there's no way that you can reach on time unless they invent time travel. So you decide - Ok, let's move it before it's too late. You take the car keys, lock the door and rush downstairs in the lift. Rush to the car, start it and navigate your way through one narrow lane after another to avoid traffic snarls and then finally you reach the plush restaurant. As you park your car off the kerb, you see your date standing there looking

as gorgeous as ever and smiling at you. You kill the engine and get out of the car and walk towards him. You suddenly see his face turning crimson and as you go nearer to him, you feel that he is certainly uncomfortable with something in you. You start thinking - Hmmm....everything seems Ok to me! Why is he staring at me like that?

You finally reach him and are about to give him a hug when he pushes you away and says - "Where are your pants?"

It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere.
Agnes Repplier

It's a helluva start, being able to recognize what makes you happy.
Lucille Ball

I've wondered what my sexuality might be, but I've never wondered whether it was acceptable or not. Anyway, who really cares whether I'm gay or straight?"
George Michael
To Britain's Big Issue magazine

It's hard enough to be taken seriously in the struggle for gay rights without having a bunch of straight girls running around kissing each other to get the attention of boys and videocameras.
M. Robin D'Antan
2002

Enchant of Love- Part I

Mohan Bhargava
Prologue

It was second year of engineering. The third semester had just got over. I had a fifteen-day vacation. When I reached after a prolonged, strenuous, energy-sucking thirty six hours journey back home, I found out that my parents were planning a trip to Maharashtra & Goa. Exuberance unloaded inside me and began to surface on my face.

“Co' on dad, you never told me about this!”

“Take that as a surprise!” Dad said.

“But dad, I haven't got decent clothes!”

“Nothing to worry, you have plenty out here, here's your time to utilize 'em.”

I looked at my mom, meaningfully, as I knew she would definitely help me in choosing the right ones for the trip.

I have been visiting places with parents since I was a child. The very first place of visit was South India, when I was in the second standard. I still remember how vexed I used to get when people enquired back, “So, are you in KG -Two?” whenever I used to tell them that I studied in class two. I would retort back, making a funny face, “No! Standard two!” People used to giggle at such a cute expression from a kid.

We would normally move out once in four years as the LTA provided by dad's office was a World Cup occurrence. So, I could boast of seeing almost every state in India. The enthusiasm to visit new places came entirely from mom. Dad, though he had some inertia, could be convinced (or rather overpowered) and hence the propositions were always accepted after a thorough feasibility analysis!

I decided to extend my vacation by another five days. I would be sick for those days (of course on paper). This was done so that we could get a very pleasant and uninterrupted stay in Goa. We planned our itinerary and allotted a straight

seven-day to Goa. I requested dad to buy me some good Tees and jeans so that I would feel comfortable in the hot and humid weather of Goa.

The School Boys

It was the end of January when we commenced our tour. We hired a car from Bhusawal, to see Ajanta & Ellora followed by Aurangabad.

I felt as if Aurangabad was a medieval city. We visited the Daulatabad fort, where I had to go up straight, around 200 – 300 steps, in order to reach the top and get an aerial view of the picturesque old city. A series of secret, quizzical, subterranean passages lie coiled like a python amidst the fort, I was getting scared at times as I had to go all alone, since my dad and mom preferred to stay back in the car. Upon seeing the height of the ancient structure their interest level had degraded all of a sudden. The Fort itself lies in the body of an isolated hill; the steep hill sides at the base falling so sharply to the moat that no hostile troops could scale the height. But given the enthusiasm and positive energy of guys of my age, the uphill task was cheerfully accepted.

I would have perceived some earthly pleasures as I thought I would be influenced and maneuvered by the existence of other physical (or virtual) entities around myself. Indeed I could see decent guys in considerable numbers, and in order to make everything look usual I avoided prolonging a stare at anyone. There was a group of boys, from some local school, who were all dressed in school uniforms. I tried following this group discreetly. From their conversations I found out they must have been studying in plus two. There were three guys in that bunch who were genuinely handsome with well built bodies and broad shoulders.

I always fantasized guys having spatial hair on their body, chest & legs, that makes them more masculine with a radiance of deep, pure and fresh touch of irreverence, and I was very happy that most of these guys had that facet.

There are small alleys inside the fort and hence are pretty constrained in terms of passage space for a group of people passing through them. They had to jostle and help each other in this way, making room for the next step. So, the perverted soul in me tried to reap an advantage out of this, but, I was disallowed that privilege by their guide. He was taking care that no body could listen to his voice other than that group, and he was taking them far away from everybody else. So, what I would do was, to show an unintentional urge to get in touch with those school students. It just happened that I stroked up a small conversation with one from that trio. I didn't have to initiate it, that boy named Ramu was having problems climbing a step due to poor visibility; I just gave him my hand as a gesture of support.

"Thank you, Sir," Ramu said.

"No problem," I said, and then added "By the way I am just few years older than you, no need to call me Sir.

He smiled back. I reciprocated as well. I had a chance to get a closer look at him later as we walked down into a bright passage.

"So, which standard do you study in?" I was afraid to lose the track.

"Class twelve, this is a short trip organized by our class," he replied.

"I can see only boys; don't you have girls in your class?" I tried acting straight; just in order to get involved in a chit chat with this boy, who was moving near to the other two.

"Our's is not a co-educational school, we don't have any girls' school even nearby!" he frowned.

"That must be boring for you boys." I winked. Ramu and his friend chuckled. We didn't need an introduction to proceed with the conversation further.

I chanced snick peeks at Ramu as we kept on communicating. In fact it was I who would ask them a lot of questions. Savoring & relishing the frame constructed out of mind-boggling entities was my favorite pastime. I wouldn't at all lose that convenience there as well.

Ramu had a charming physique; he had a mole on his upper lip. I noticed the way his skin had become lighter beneath his second shirt button. He had a wheatish complexion. As I saw his armpit while he was climbing up a rock by holding my hand (once again!), I found that the lush outgrowth was quite satisfactory. This added to the masculine aura that he carried. I could sniff a faint smell of some soup mixed with sweat when I tried getting close to him. It was enticing to watch the way his hair had coiled near his ears, and the sparse hair on his chest, which was partially visible.

I knew I wouldn't be able to initiate anything of interest with him or the other two, as they were in a group, and it would be really weird to even look for chances. The pleasure I had derived while being with those guys was something I would have to take back out of the day's visit. Somehow my mind was not able to perceive this as I still tried looking out for avenues for seclusion of any one of them from that group at some nook of the mysterious fort. But, I couldn't anyway discover any remote possibility of such a thing happening.

Happily, I was rewarded by at least a glimpse of their beauty, when two guys went for an open air disposal of their body liquid. I positioned favorably in order to get a fair view of Ramu and his friend. He had a nice organ, it was semi-erect then, around four inches, I just imagined the potential it had to elongate, and I would have just preferred the elasticity to be the maximum.

We finally came to the thirty-meter high Chand Minar (Tower). It has three circular galleries, and looks beautiful. Dusk was setting up, and in the partial darkness I watched the trio for the last time and waved them goodbye. My heart became a bit heavy thinking that I would never ever see them again. But then I thought, a considerable portion of trip was still in contention, so I would rather have the opportunity of watching even better guys, in Goa and may be in Mumbai too.

We left Aurangabad the next day morning for Pune, reached there in about four hours, and shifted to a hotel. The following day we had seen certain prominent places in Pune like Raja Kelkar Museum, Parvati Hill and temple, Shanivar Wada, and Aga Khan Palace.

(To be continued...)

He;

Aham

He, the embodiment of beauty; the fairest of fair; whom Buonarroto would have treasured beyond measure; whose form alone is capable of building almighty empires; who, unadorned and austere, surpasses all models of masculine comeliness;

His hair a lush growth on his scalp, nature's boast of abundance; of the darkest of blacks, the colour of night in the deepest rainforests; the long locks worn in an artfulness putting to shame many a human creation;

His skin a lesson in colour and beauty; of a smooth fairness – the colour of gold married to cream – a gift of a shade to an artist, a feast to the eyes; mellow to touch, the definition of velvet;

His brow vast and lustrous; his temples with their royal slant a beauty manifest and subtle at once;

His eyes a piercing black, clear and satisfied, mirrors of a guiltless conscience; open wide in authority; with the tranquillity of moonbeams reflected on a calm lake;

His nose sculpted into perfection; straight in its length and rounded at the tip, a shape of exotic homeliness;

His cheekbones high with a princely elegance; chiselled out by The Maker with the splendour of antiquity;

His lips an impossible clash of sensuality and warmth; of the colour of ripe pomegranates, and as succulent; curved in such pleasing a shape that in all, resisting is but impossible;

His smile an exercise of the universe in clarity and joy, soothing the heart and filling it with delight; the perfect expression for joys eternal and ephemeral; His stubble an innocent, gentle, primal celebration of masculinity; mischief and certainty blend into an air of perfect manliness as it curls around his parted lips;

His face thus one that Olympus couldn't possess; in its glory almost divine; its features clearer than any mascara could define; a seraphic visage fairer than Adonis, that would have an admirer dream of it for nights;

His long neck a classical beauty, fair and high, with the teasing hint of an Adam's apple; the nape handsome with its fuzz, where an amorous hand may pass around in ardour;

His shoulders broad and enduring, where a worthy head may rest in love and fulfilment;

His arms strong and curved in a raw and virile beauty; imposing in their power and fairness; suggestive in shape, their sheer strength almost seductive; perfect to wrap around when winter creeps in from under the sheets;

His hands finely sculpted and well skilled; firm in grasp; his fingers carved in elegance masterful; his touch warm and intense, his handclasp an enviable

comfort;

His august chest a sermon in sculpture and splendour; accentuated by the fuzz of hair, sparse but rightly distributed; the pinnacle of manly allure painted in the best of colours in the right places; its curves a beauty so inviting it takes a Himalayan effort not to give in;

His abdomen and its shape a marvel; its black curls arranged to lure; his waist shaped in precision, well demarcated to guide to treasures beauteous and vital; His thighs the end of all human endeavour; shaped in consummate luxury – strong, aesthetic, delightful – and designed to support empires;

His fragrance an overwhelming aphrodisiac; of summer gardens and winter fireplaces; bewitching the senses and benumbing the mind, capable of tempting saints; exquisitely overawing, a priceless gift to him that shall lay in his arms in love;

His voice a rich baritone, the zenith of nature's designs to communicate, to call, to create; commanding, complying, tender; melodious as the greatest notes ever written;

His demeanour that of a commander of time, for whom centuries lay in waiting; head upright, not a care in the world; certainty in state and purpose in stride; flamboyant among friends and spirited in conversation; imposing in stature, magnetic in persona;

He; whose person is designed for every conceivable delight, in fragrant gardens on moonlit nights; endowed with the strengths to direct histories and move oceans; to be the companion of another of equally incomparable merits, in spirit and in body, eternally.

Jesse Helms and Newt Gingrich were shaking hands congratulating themselves on the introduction of an antigay bill in Congress. If it passes, they won't be able to shake hands, because it will then be illegal for a prick to touch an asshole.

Judy Carte

QUEER 'N FUNNY!

What a drag it is getting old...

When I went to the bar tonight, I noticed this old boy about 75-80 years sitting all alone in the corner and he was crying over his cocktail.

I stopped and asked him what was wrong.

He said: "I have a 22 year old lover at home. I met him a month or so ago, right here in this very bar!" He continued; "He makes love to me every morning and then he makes me pancakes, sausage, fresh fruit and freshly ground, brewed coffee."



I said: "Well, then why are you crying?"

He said: "He makes me homemade soup for lunch and my favorite brownies and then he makes love to me half the afternoon."

I said: "Well, so why are you crying?"

He said: "For dinner he makes me a gourmet meal with wine and my favorite dessert and then he makes love to me until 2:00 am."

I said: "Well, for goodness sakes! Why in the world would you be CRYING!"

And he said: "I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE I LIVE!"

Three friends -- two straight guys and a gay guy -- and their significant others were on a cruise. A tidal wave came up and swamped the ship; they all drowned, and next thing you know, they're standing before St. Peter.

First came one of the straight guys and his wife. St. Peter shook his head sadly. "I can't let you in. You loved money too much. You loved it so much, you even married a woman named Penny."

Then came the second straight guy. "Sorry, can't let you in, either. You loved food too much. You loved to eat so much, you even married a woman named Candy!"

The gay guy turned to his boyfriend and whispered nervously, "It doesn't look good, Dick."

There was this man who walked into a bar and says to the bartender 10 shots of whiskey.

The bartender asks, "What's the matter?"

The man says, "I found out my brother is gay and marrying my best friend."

The next day the same man comes in and orders 12 shots of whiskey.

The bartender asks, "What's wrong this time?"

The man says, "I found out that my son is gay."

The next day the same man comes in the bar and orders 15 shots of whiskey.

Then the bartender asks, "Doesn't anyone in your family like women?"

The man looks up and says, "Apparently my wife does."

Delhi

[Gay Delhi Sunday Socials](#)

Sunday

A weekly social gathering for gay and bisexual men. For more information on venues and timings and to know about other gay events in Delhi, join the GayDelhi email list by sending a blank email to togaydelhi-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

[The Delhi Frontrunners and Walkers](#)

Sunday

A weekly running/walking club for Delhi's LGBTI people. For more details email frontdel@gmail.com

Labels are for filing. Labels are for clothing.
Labels are not for people.
Martina Navratilova

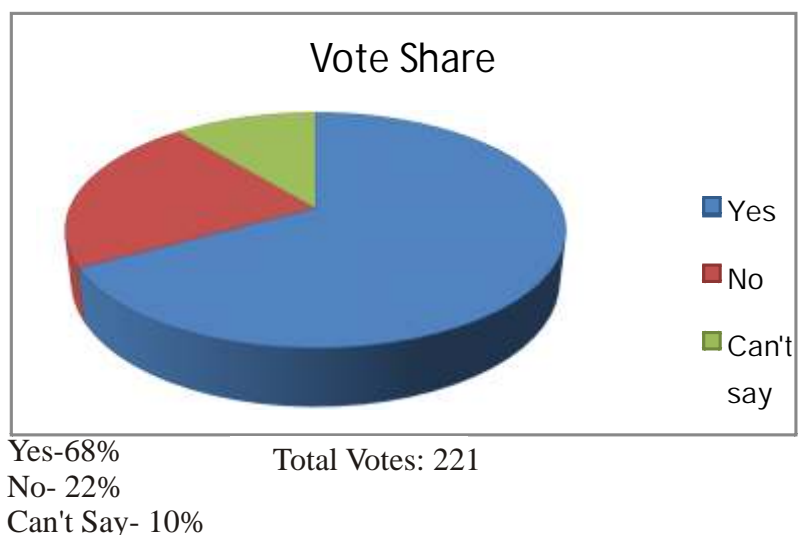
Mumbai

Gay Bombay Sunday Meet

Sun, 6:00 pm

JATC (Just Around the Corner) Bandra West. Entry free. For more details, visit the [GayBombay website](#).

Has the situation in India on LGBT issues changed positively over the past two years?



[Naz Dost Helpline for gay men.](#)

Monday to Saturday 1-7 pm
The Naz Foundation also hosts weekly meetings and support groups for men.
Call for details (011-2981-2287)

[Sangini Helpline](#)

Tuesday noon 3 pm, Friday 6-8 pm
Sangini provides confidential advice for women who are attracted to women.
Call for details (011-6567-6450)

[ICWO Lesbian helpline \(Chennai\)](#)

Monday – Friday 9.00 AM to 6.00 PM
A dedicated helpline for Lesbians by the ICWO (Indian community welfare organization) in association with Action Aid
Call for details(044-6551-5742)

[TARSHI Helpline](#)

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-4 pm
Confidential and anonymous counseling and referrals on sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.
Call for details (011-2437-2229)

[Alternative Law Forum](#)

Mon- Fri, 9:30 am- 6:30 pm
The forum provides legal services related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights.
122/4, Infantry Road, Bengaluru
(2286-8757)

[Lawyers' Collective](#)

Mon-Fri, 9am – 6pm
This collective works on issues related to discrimination on grounds of HIV and AIDS
First floor, 4A- MAH Road, Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru
(4123-4130)

[LESBIT](#)

Sat 3:30- 6:30 pm, Sun 11:30 am – 6:30 pm
LESBIT is an organization that offers counseling for lesbians and the transgender community
Call for details (99452-31493)

Lesbianism has always seemed to me an extremely inventive response to a shortage of men, but otherwise not worth the trouble.

Nora Ephron

Heartburn, 1983

Let my lusts be my ruin, then, since all else is a fake and a mockery.

Hart Crane

"The only queer people are those who don't love anybody." ~*Rita Mae Brown*

"The fact that we are all human beings is infinitely more important than all the peculiarities that distinguish humans from one another."
~*Simone de Beauvoir (1908--1986)*

"When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one."
~*From the tombstone of a gay Vietnam veteran*

"Soldiers who are not afraid of guns, bombs, capture, torture or death say they are afraid of homosexuals. Clearly we should not be used as soldiers; we should be used as weapons."
~*Letter to the editor, The Advocate*

"If love is the answer, could you rephrase the question?"
~*Lily Tomlin*

"Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable seeing two men holding guns than holding hands?"
~*Ernest Gaines*

"Drag is when a man wears everything a lesbian won't."
~*Unknown*

"I am reminded of a colleague who reiterated 'all my homosexual patients are quite sick' - to which I finally replied 'so are all my heterosexual patients'.
~*Ernest van den Haag, psychotherapist*

"My mother took me to a psychiatrist when I was fifteen because she thought I was a latent homosexual. There was nothing latent about it."
~*Amanda Bearse*

"The closet is an awful place to die."
~*Unknown*

"One should no more deplore homosexuality than left-handedness."
~*Towards a Quaker View of Sex, 1964*